

Sanctuary by Agatha Christie

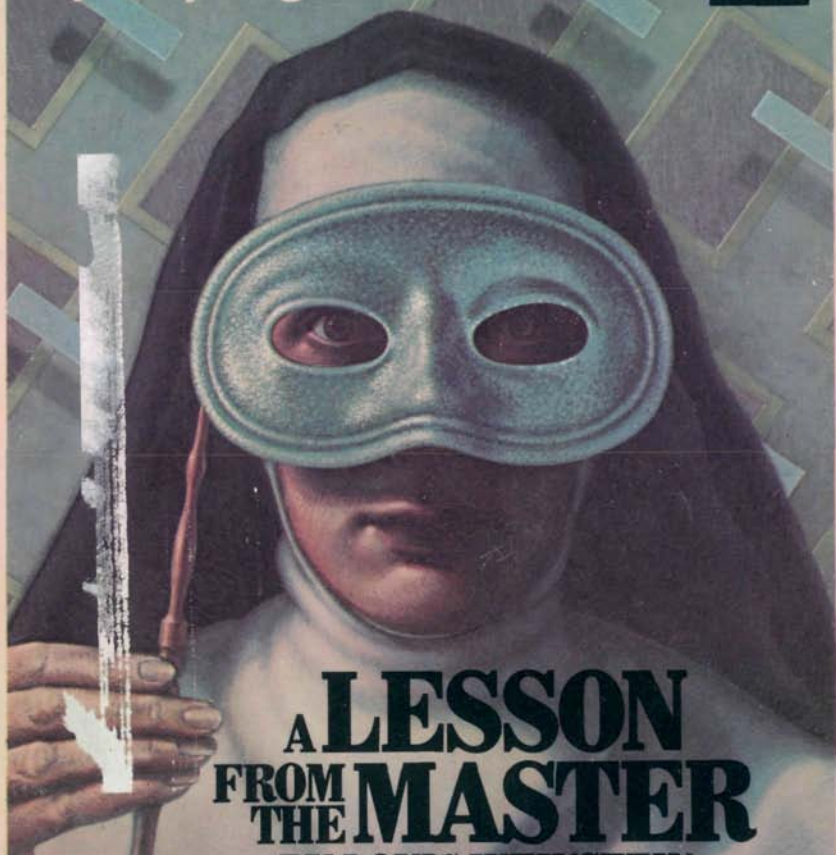
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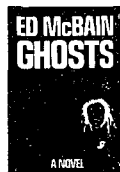
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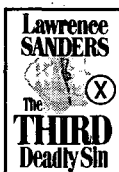


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The fog swirled slowly round him, driven by a heavy movement of its own; for of course there was no wind. It hung in poisonous thick coils and loops; it rose and sank; no light penetrated it directly from street lamp or motorcar...



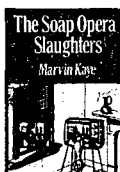
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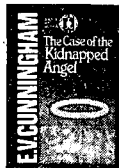
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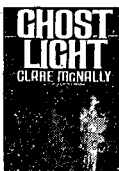
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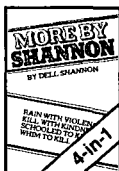
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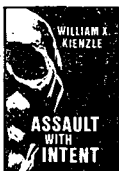
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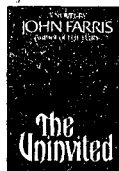


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Art Mathews shot himself, loudly and messily, in the center of the parade ring at Ounstable races. I was standing only six feet away from him, but he did it so quickly that had it been only six inches I would not have had time to stop him.



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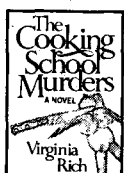
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MY SWEET AUDRINA
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There was something strange about the house where I grew up. There were shadows in the corners and whispers on the stairs... There was a war going on in our house, a silent war that sounded no guns, and the bodies that fell were only wishes that died.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by Cathleen Jordan

Now that summer is almost upon us, those of you who plan to make a trip into New England might take the opportunity to stop for an hour or so at the Gillette Castle in Gillette Castle State Park, near Hadlyme, Connecticut. It was for years the home of William Gillette, the actor who first portrayed Sherlock Holmes on the stage and, it remains an imposing stone pile with battlements and towers on the banks of the Connecticut River, hidden away in lovely, almost remote woods and hills, a "very special" setting, according to AHMM's film reviewer, Peter Shaw, who saw it last fall.

Visitors to it are free to wander all over its many rooms where there are such curious devices as intricate door locks and window latches, and a concealed door in the study. But Peter strongly suggests that if

you are there in July or August, you first read the pamphlet about the castle available in its gift shop. Tours can only be given during the first few weeks of June and after Labor Day; in the interim, although there are plenty of parks department employees around to answer questions, many of the interesting aspects of the design as well as Gillette's special inventions aren't apparent to the casual viewer.

There are not, Peter tells us, any spectacularly mysterious features to the castle (no hidden passages or the like), but it's a unique spot and one that might—in small scale—have been an appropriate setting for a mystery. It is, of course, of interest to students of Gillette.

The castle will be open this year from May 21st to October 10th, from eleven to five every day, and till December 18th on weekends only.

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FICTION

The Roughneck and the Dead Guy



by Brent Haywood

Illustration by Breck Steadman

5

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The oilfield pays pretty good money and I drive a nice car, a two-door Cutlass that looks sharp and rides good, even in the rain. Also, I got a tape player for when I'm driving alone, which is most of the time. I was alone this time, if you didn't count the dead guy.

Even if you did count him, I was alone. He wasn't there any more. He was dead. He might have been in Cleveland, for all I knew. Maybe that's where you go when you die. The only thing I really knew was that first he was beside the road, then he was in my car, and now he was gone. He had probably been in the bayou before he was beside the road—Bayou Lafourche. His clothes were soaking wet, wetter than the rain, and they stuck to his body. I guess I should say *the* body. You don't own anything when you're dead, not even a body. It's true. You can ask a lawyer. There are plenty of them in the phone book if you don't believe me.

I was taking the guy to a hospital, until he left. That's exactly what it was like. One minute he was there—he wasn't making any noise or anything, but he was *there*—and the next minute he was gone. He didn't groan or jerk around or any of that stuff they do in the movies. He just left, leaving the body behind for me to deal with.

The first thing I did was shut off the tape player. I felt funny listening to Tammy Wynette with a dead guy. Then I got to By Pass and found the sheriff's office. It was right there on the highway.

I left the body in the car and went inside. There was a long Formica counter and two guys sitting around a desk behind it, a young guy and an older guy. The fluorescent lights made me squint. The young guy said, "What you need, huh?" He seemed kind of bored. He and the older guy had been speaking Cajun French when I walked in.

"I need some help," I said. "There's a dead guy in my car."

After that they weren't bored any more, let me tell you. The young guy ran out to my car, and the older one sat me down on a wooden bench and began asking questions.

"Name?"

"Andrew Norton."

"Where you live at, Mr. Andrew?"

"New Orleans."

"Occupation?"

"Chain hand."

"Oh, yeah. One a' dem oilfield boys. Who you work for, huh?"

"Gulfpride Drilling. Rig 93."

"Yeah? I got me a *cousin* workin' for ol' Gulfpride. He out on Number 48, up in the swamps by Baton Rouge. You know ol' Freddie Lebeaux? They call him

T-Man, lot of times . . . ”

Then the young guy came back. He didn't look too happy. He glanced at me, then said to the older man, "We gots us a wise guy here, sheriff. There ain't nothin' in dat man's car but an ol' duffel full of work clothes."

You can imagine my surprise.

The young guy walked over to where I was sitting. He poked his finger into my chest while he said all kinds of nasty things about my mother and me. Then he warned me about coming into other people's towns and trying to make fools of them. The more he talked the more worked up he got. Normally I don't much like people poking their finger into my chest while they talk nasty. In fact, I didn't like it this time. I might have done something about it, but all of the sudden I felt real tired. Maybe the older sheriff saw how tired I was, and maybe he didn't. Either way, he called the young guy off. Then he said, "You just got in?"

I said, "Yessir. Couple hours ago."

"You must-had some boat ride in dis weather, huh?"

I nodded my head. The weather had grounded the helicopters, and we'd had a ten hour boat ride from ninety miles out in the Gulf—a whole bouncing seasick day, after a whole

night of the hardest work in the world: wet-tripping drill pipe. I can't even begin to tell you what that's like. Just imagine something really hard and dirty and dangerous and no matter what it is, wet-tripping is worse. I was tired, all right.

"And you had a couple beers tonight, hey?"

"Yessir. Little bar down below Golden Meadow. I've had two or three . . . "

"Golden Meadow! Jesus, son, jus' be glad you didn' stop in *dat* town with some cock an' bull story about dead guys! They don' fool around down dar in Golden Meadow!"

He was right about that. His voice was smooth and easy, friendly enough to make me think there never had been a dead guy in my car. I said, "Look, sheriff, I'm sorry about all this. I guess I'm pretty tired. If it's all the same to you I'll just get on home."

The sheriff smiled. "Hey, cher, dat all right. You go 'head on. Everyone allowed to let off a little steam, huh? You just be careful, okay?"

I said I would and got up to go. The young guy didn't look too happy, but I couldn't help that. I was feeling like there was a whole lot I couldn't help.

The rain had settled down to a mist that felt good on my face as I walked to my car. I don't mind tying one on after a tough

week offshore, but I'd rather not hallucinate dead guys. It's just the way I am.

I got into the car and started the engine. The old Cajun sheriff had been real nice about the whole thing, and I felt thankful. In lots of small towns along the bayou they don't take too well to outsiders, especially oil-field trash. I turned in the seat to back the car out, and my hand brushed against a wet shoulder.

It was the dead guy.

He was still there and he was still dead. Or *he* wasn't there but his body was. Or *the* body.

However it was, I wasn't letting that body out of my sight. I leaned on the horn. I leaned long and loud. They could probably hear it all the way to Cleveland if they cared to listen. The door to the sheriff's office opened, and I saw the young guy in the doorway, framed by the light from inside. Then the old guy was next to him. I kept blaring the horn. The young guy came running and the older guy followed behind—I noticed he had a limp. I let the horn get quiet.

The young guy ran around to my side of the car and stuck his hand in the window. He grabbed my collar and started saying more bad things about me and my mother. I opened the door real hard. The outside handle caught his hipbone, and he went

down. I was out of the car before he got to his feet, and he came up swinging. I dodged his first punch and then heard a gunshot:

The sheriff had fired his pistol into the air. When he had our attention he said, "Leon, boy, you come around over here, huh?" The young guy walked around to the other side of the car. He was breathing hard. When he got there the sheriff said, "Now what if you take a look inside dar, huh? An' tell this ol' gimpy-legged sheriff what you see."

The young guy saw the body, too. I'd had my doubts, but that made three of us that saw the body. That meant it was really there and I felt much better.

The sheriff kept after his deputy: "What is dat in dar, Leon-boy?"

The deputy finally got it out. "It's a dead guy, sheriff!"

"I gar-ron-tee! Now go an' get a stretcher so we can get it inside." The deputy went back to the office and the sheriff opened the door on the passenger side. "Come on over here, Mr. Andrew, an' tell me how did dis dead guy get in your car?"

So I told him. It didn't take long. It had been about eleven when the boat finally made it to the landing. I'd driven along Route 1, listening to the Tammy Wynette tape and stopping in Golden Meadow like I'd told

him. Somewhere past Galliano the guy had flagged me from the side of the road. He was soaking wet and it was raining so I stopped. He said he was hurt, and I told him I'd get him to a doctor. That was all the guy had said and all that I had said. A little while later he died.

Leon came with the stretcher, and we loaded the body into it. The eyes were wide open. We carried him into the sheriff's office. When we got near the lit doorway, I saw that he'd been shot. There was a gaping hole in his chest and red all over his shirt and pants. He'd been shot in the back, and the wound the bullet had left when it came out in front was horrible. It was a miracle he'd been able to flag down my car. We got him inside and set the stretcher down on the Formica counter.

Leon was ranting: "Sheriff, I swear! When I looked in dat car, dar weren't no dead body a-tall! I'm telling you now . . ."

The sheriff said, "At's all righty, Leon, you go in the back an' get us a sheet to put over him."

When Leon was gone, I asked, "What do you make of him not seeing that body, sheriff?"

"Hell, I don' know. Some a' these kids, they so crazy they stupid. He a good boy, though. He jus' get excited an' miss things. Excuse me. I got a call to make."

The sheriff went to make his call and Leon came back with the sheet. The sheriff's explanation didn't make any sense to me. Sure the kid was young and excitable, even foolish. But he had noticed my duffel bag—how do you notice a duffel and miss a body? I sure didn't know, but there was a lot I didn't know. When you're a roughneck, you get used to not knowing things. They pay you to work, not to know.

The sheriff finished his phone call and came over to the counter. "That was the parish coroner—he live over by Larose. You don' mind waiting 'round here till he can come have a look, huh?"

I said I didn't mind and sat down. I could hear the rain picking up again outside. The sheriff went in back and made more calls.

"Some storm, huh Leon?" I said.

Leon was shaking his head and arranging the sheet. "I swear! I look in dat car an' I swear I didn't see no body, now. I look real good, too. Real good . . ."

He went on like that. Maybe I was just real tired, but the longer I sat there, the more I believed him.

The coroner got there about forty-five minutes later. He looked like every country doctor you ever saw in the mov-

ies—rimless glasses, leather satchel, plodding manner. He had probably pulled Leon from the womb and slapped him into taking his first breath. The coroner passed the time of night with the sheriff and then pulled the sheet off the body.

"Why, that's Willy Terbonne's boy, if I'm not mistaken!" He leaned over to get a closer look and brushed some wet hair and dirt off the dead guy's face. The old sheriff came closer, too.

"Why, I believe you right. Dat sure look like ol' Willy's boy now. What's his name—Raymon, huh?"

"Mmmm." The coroner opened his bag. While he looked over the body, the sheriff told him what had happened. Léon looked relieved when the sheriff skipped the part about him not seeing the body in my car.

After a while the coroner stood up straight. "Well," he said, "looks like he was shot with a good size gun. Also, it looks like he was shot while he was swimming—the blood in his clothes is washed-out looking, see? The bullet that went through him is probably on the bottom of the bayou."

The sheriff nodded his head. "I guess I better call ol' Willy on the phone and get him over here."

The coroner nodded at that and pulled the sheet up over the

body. The sheriff made his sad call and then came over to me.

"I called up ol' Gulfpride a little while ago, and they say you work for dem all right. I guess you can go on home. Just put your address and phone number down on here for me, okay?"

I filled in the little card he gave me, handed it back to him, and got up to go.

The sheriff looked at what I'd written. "That's good," he said. "That's the same address ol' Gulfpride gave me for where you live at. You drive careful now. I'll call you if I need you."

"Yessir," I said, and went out the door. It was pouring again and I got soaked walking to my car. I could have run, but I didn't feel like it. I drove to New Orleans without stopping. When I got to my apartment, I had a splitting headache. It was still raining when I crawled into bed.

It was dry and bright when I woke up. My brain felt a little muddled, but my headache was gone. The change in the weather made everything that had happened the night before seem like an old dream. I looked at the clock by my bed. It was two thirty in the afternoon.

I showered, shaved, and checked the kitchen. As usual, my week offshore had left

everything in the refrigerator looking a little stale. I made coffee and drank it on the back porch, trying to get excited about the coming-in-from-offshore drunk I still had in front of me. I felt like I'd earned it. The air was clean after the storm, but good and hot. I decided to call a friend of mine and went back inside, to the air conditioning and the phone.

My friend wasn't home, but I knew where he was. His name is Mike Prophet, and he's a smart guy, except it's not the kind of smart that makes you any money. He works the graveyard shift as a security guard in some office building down on Poydras. When he's not working or sleeping, he's playing chess and drinking beer in a bar called the Maple Leaf. He's a terrible chess player, which is strange, because he's normally real smart about things that don't make you any money.

I figured I'd go over to the Maple Leaf and find him. Mike's a good guy for tying one on, and I knew he'd get a charge out of my story about the dead guy. I put on my drinking clothes and went out to my car.

The Cutlass. When I saw it, I felt like my stomach had been kicked in. It looked like hell. Both doors were open, and the hood was up. The window on the passenger side was bashed

in, and the seats were slashed. Stuffing was everywhere. The back seat was pulled out, and the trunk was a mess. The glove compartment door had been pried off. Nothing seemed to be missing—my stereo was still there. Everything was just trashed.

I put it back together as best I could. The tape from the night before was still in the machine, and Tammy Wynette was singing her heart out when I pulled into traffic. My stomach was calming down a little.

I parked in front of the Maple Leaf, and I could see Mike at the chessboard just inside the door. He was playing an old Irish guy named Murphy who always beats him. I went in, and Mike looked up from his game.

"Where y'at, Andy! You just get in?"

"Last night, and I'm still sober."

"Your car looks like hell. What happened?"

"I'll tell you," I said, and went up to the bar. While the bartender got beer I heard Murphy say, "Check. It's over in two." I took three beers over to the chessboard, and they were setting up the pieces for another game. Murphy said, "Thanks, Andy. Why don't you play bright boy?"

I said, "Sure," and took Murphy's chair. Murphy went over

to the bar, and I moved my king's pawn forward two squares. Mike moved his queen's pawn one and said, "So what happened to the Cutlass?"

"Vandals," I said. "Somebody trashed it for fun. Nothing's missing. Happened early this morning, I guess."

"Yeah?" Mike was playing a defense he had showed me once, called the Sicilian. I play a little chess when I'm offshore and I usually don't have any more trouble beating Mike than Murphy does, but it's easier when he plays Sicilian. Mike reads too many chess books.

"Yeah," I said. "Probably neighborhood kids. Some of them are a little wild. But wait until I tell you about last night!"

Mike was quiet for a minute while he thought about a move. Then he made it and said, "What happened last night?"

I moved and said, "There was a dead guy in my car."

Mike looked up from the board. He has this way of looking at you like he thinks you're crazy. He bends his head forward and sort of looks *up* at you. At the same time he makes a half-smirk with his mouth. So he looked at me that way, and I said, "No kidding, Mike. A dead guy," and I told him the whole story. It's easier to play while you're telling a story than while you're listening to one, and when I'd finished telling

my story, I was a move away from trapping Mike's queen. Mike looked at the board longer than usual, then tipped his king.

"Let's go to your place," he said. "I feel like drinking."

"Sure," I said, but it struck me kind of odd. Not the drinking part—Mike almost always feels like drinking—but the part about going to my place. I have air conditioning, and Mike hates to drink there. "I like to sweat when I drink," he says.

Anyway, we turned in the chess pieces and went out to the Cutlass. On Carrolton Avenue we stopped at a K&B drugstore for a case of beer. Mike was real quiet, smoking cigarettes and looking straight ahead. I didn't take offense. He gets that way sometimes.

But then we got to my place and Mike jumped out of the car before I even got it shut off. He sprinted for the door without even *offering* to help carry the beer. It didn't make any sense. Maybe he had to get to the bathroom and it was making him crazy. If that was it, running wasn't going to help him. The apartment door was locked, and the key was in my pocket.

Only I was mistaken—the door wasn't locked. Mike disappeared inside. I figured I'd forgotten to lock it in the shock of seeing my car torn up. I laughed at myself, grabbed the beer out of the back, and fol-

lowed him. What I saw when I got to the open front door stopped my laughter.

My apartment was trashed.

Mike didn't give me time to get mad. He barked: "Anything missing? Check. Hurry!" He took the beer from me and headed for the kitchen. I looked around.

The stereo had been pushed off its table, but it was all there on the floor. Records were everywhere. So were cushions from the couch and chair. All the furniture had been moved, some of it turned over. As far as I could tell, nothing was taken.

The bedroom was the same—clothes and pillows and sheets everywhere. They hadn't even bothered to steal the TV.

Mike was checking the window in the kitchen. "Looks like they came in here and went out the front," he said. "Anything gone?"

"Nothing," I said. The kitchen had been trashed, too. "Damn kids."

"No way it was kids," Mike said. "This was grownups. So was your car. They weren't real smooth or real smart, but they were looking for something."

"For what? Jesus, all I own is Tammy Wynette records!" I grabbed a beer from the refrigerator.

"I could guess, or we could find out for sure. To do that we

take a drive to the country."

"Huh? I don't get it."

"To By Pass. To where you found the dead guy before he was dead."

"I still don't understand . . ."

"I'm not sure I do either, but standing here talking isn't going to help. It's getting late, and we need daylight."

"Throw the beer in your cooler— if you can find it in this mess—and we'll go to my place. We need to take my car."

"Hell, Mike, that ol' Valiant don't even have a radio in it."

"You'll have to do without. They know your ride. It's best if we arrive on the quiet."

That made me smile. Mike was cranked up, thinking and talking like Philip Marlowe or somebody. I'd seen him this way before, and there's no stopping him. You just have to let him go and try to keep up. And hope he has things figured out when he finally runs down.

I got the cooler and filled it. We got in my car and drove over to Oak Street. Mike kept looking out the back window. When we got in front of the Maple Leaf, he told me to pull over.

"Why?" I said. "You live three blocks from here!"

"Dammit, pull over. Trust me. We're going in for a drink."

I pulled over. "I don't get it, Mike . . ."

"Get out, and take a look at

that pickup, but not a long look."

I got out and peeked while I locked the car. A green Chevy three quarter ton with red blotches of primer drove past slow. We went into the bar and got two beers. Mike led me to the garden in back. It's a nice spot to have a drink in the afternoon or on a warm night—open air, a few banana trees around a patio, and a high fence to keep it all in. Only we didn't sit on the patio. We took a table near the doorway, where we could look through the main part of the bar and see Oak Street through the front window.

"Watch," Mike said.

I watched.

After a few seconds the same pickup passed by outside. I kept watching. After a minute or so it passed again. Mike said, "You recognize those guys?" I shook my head no. "They picked us up about two blocks from your place," Mike said. "We go over the fence."

We did just that. There was a couple drinking on the patio, but they didn't seem to notice. A lot of things go unnoticed in New Orleans. We walked three blocks down Zimple Street, then crossed back over to Oak, where Mike's car was parked. I got down on the floor, and Mike pushed the drive button on the old Valiant and pulled us into

traffic. The pickup was parked about a block from my car, waiting for us to come out of the Maple Leaf. A couple of blocks later, Mike told me I could get up.

"Jesus, Mike, we left two beers in the Maple Leaf and almost a case in my car—on ice. At this rate I'll never get a good drunk in before I have to go back offshore. And what's with the guys following us?"

"Don't worry. We'll stop for more. Now run the whole story by me again, starting before the dead guy was dead."

So I did. We stopped for beer on Claiborne Avenue and headed for the Huey Long Bridge. I drank and talked and Mike drove and listened, sucking on Chesterfields and blowing smoke out the window. A few miles past the bridge we got into the flat grassy swamp country that looks the same all across south Louisiana. From the highway it doesn't seem like much. But follow one of those backwater bayous around a couple of bends and you'll be in the land of the dinosaurs. Every side stream and every moss-covered cypress looks like every other one. Once in a while you'll come across an old gas well, but except for that you'll feel like you're the only human that's ever been—it's that spooky. And you can forget about finding your way out

again. Those little bayous are all one-way, unless you grew up Cajun. I didn't, let me tell you.

I told Mike the whole story about three times. He stopped me every once in a while to get some detail straight, or to make sure I had it right. Mostly he just drove and smoked and listened. I drank and got tired of telling the story over and over.

At Raceland we turned off Interstate 90 onto Route 1, the highway that follows Bayou Lafourche. Mike quit asking questions. In Larose he pulled over and went into a tiny grocery. A sign in the window advertised GATOR MEAT \$3.35/LB. I figured he needed cigarettes, but he came out with a newspaper and gave it to me.

"Take a look," he said. "See if they mention your dead guy."

They mentioned him all right. He got his picture on the front page, under a headline that read "By Pass Man Shot in Bayou Lafourche." I read the article aloud to Mike, and it had the story pretty straight. They even got my name right. The only thing they didn't mention was the deputy not seeing the body the first time he went to my car. I couldn't blame them for leaving that out. It was too crazy. At the end of the article they quoted the sheriff. He thought the crime might be "drugs-related."

Mike let out a "huh!" and

that was all he said. We drove on. A couple miles later he told me to get down on the floor.

"Why?"

"Just until we get through By Pass. It's better for now if that old sheriff doesn't know we're around. So get down there with the beer."

I did. Mike seemed to have things figured out. We got through By Pass and I got off the floor.

Mike said, "You think you can find the spot where you picked the guy up?"

"I dunno, Mike. Maybe. It was just outside Galliano, I think. It was awful dark and rainy, but I drive this road a lot."

"We'll go to Galliano and turn around—you can probably pick it out easier going north."

That seemed like a good idea. I tried to imagine it was the night before, dark and raining. Route 1 doesn't curve much that far south; you remember when it does. I ignored the scenery and concentrated on the road. I let my eyes squint a little. Once I thought we had the place, but then I was sure we didn't. We drove on, a long straight stretch, then a curve, and then I *knew*.

"Right here, Mike, right up here."

"Yeah?"

"Uh-huh. This is it. This is where I picked him up. I can

close my eyes and see it." Mike pulled off the road onto the bleached shell shoulder. Half of Louisiana is paved with little white shells they dredge out of the lakes and bayous. They crunch when you walk on them. Mike and I crunched across the shoulder into the tall grass. Across the bayou was more grass, more shells, and another road. It was starting to get dark, and the beer I was drinking was warm.

"By the way, Mike," I said. "What are we looking for?"

"Cocaine, probably."

"Right."

None of it was making any sense to me, but I'm used to that. I'm a roughneck, a chain hand, who works seven days and then has seven days off. They don't pay me to think, so I don't get much practice. I wandered through the grass, down to the edge of the bayou. The water was dark brown and slow-moving. Bayou water is always dark, and sometimes it doesn't move at all. I thought about the dead guy, before he was dead, swimming in that water, getting shot at, getting hit, and still swimming. Then out of the water and walking, walking through this same grass to the side of the road. The guy was tough, I had to give him that. He wasn't too smart—smart guys don't get shot—but he was tough.

Now he wasn't anything.

I walked along the bayou. The bank was high and cut away by the moving water. It would be a hard climb for anyone in the rain, harder for a guy with a bullet hole. Farther along, maybe a hundred yards, there was some brush and scrub oak. The roots were exposed where the bank was washed away. The guy would have climbed out there if he could have found the place in the dark. Maybe he was lucky. Or maybe he knew the tree was there, was swimming for it when he got shot. *Watch it, Andy, you're starting to think. They don't pay you to think.* I felt a little drunk. I was glad Mike was driving.

I finished my warm beer and tossed the bottle into the bayou. Litterbug. The bottle drifted slowly, then filled with water and sank.

It had drifted toward the tree.

I walked the same way. It gets dark fast in Louisiana. The water had turned from deep brown to black while I watched. The grass wasn't green any more and the scrub oak was more of a silhouette than a tree. I walked faster, not to beat the darkness, but because I *knew*, just like I'd known when the guy was dead, known he wasn't there any more. I ran. I heard Mike calling me but I didn't answer, didn't slow down.

It was under the tree, wrapped in white plastic—one of those garbage bags you put your kitchen trash in. It was hard, shaped like a big brick, and heavier than it looked. Mike was breathing hard when he caught up to me, and then I realized I was breathing hard, too.

"That's it, Andy," he said. "That's what they wanted."

"In my car? In my house?"

Mike nodded his head and started coughing. He smokes too much. We walked back to his car.

"I can't believe it," I said. "They trash my car, they trash where I live—before that they *kill* a guy! All for this." I tossed the white brick up in the air and caught it. "I don't get it."

"What do you figure that weighs?"

"I dunno, Mike. Feel it. Two or three pounds."

Mike didn't feel it. "It's probably a kilo," he said. "A little under three pounds—a thousand grams. Cocaine goes for around a hundred a gram in New Orleans."

"A hundred thousand dollars. Holy Jesus." I got into the car. Mike turned on the engine, and I opened a beer.

Mike said, "A hundred thousand—except they'll step on it, cut it with baby laxative, bad speed, anything white and cheap. You can probably double

the figure, at least." He pulled the car onto the highway.

"I don't see it, Mike. Two hundred thousand for this brick. I tried this stuff once—a lady. I was seeing had some. All it did was make my nose run and my teeth grind. I'll stick to beer."

Mike made a noise that probably meant he was thinking about something else. I said, "So what next?"

"We go see your friend the sheriff and turn this in. Then we tell him about two guys in a pickup."

"Two hundred thousand dollars." I remember thinking you could buy a lot of warm beer for that kind of money. You could even manage to keep it cold. You sure as hell wouldn't have to work offshore.

I thought of other things, too.

I tossed the brick onto the floor, with the empty bottles. I didn't like the way it made me think. It was better when Mike did the thinking.

"So how do you figure all this, Mike? Explain to this ol' dumb roughneck."

"I'm not sure about any of this, Andy, but the way I see it, the dead guy—Raymon—was on a boat. A lot of stuff gets smuggled into south Louisiana, especially now that Miami has tightened up. It's a perfect place for it; thousands of backwater bayous, impossible to patrol.

Maybe the kid was some kind of a guide and decided to try for a bigger cut, jumping off the boat in a dark rainstorm with a brick. Only one of his bosses was a lucky shot."

"And the kid makes it to the bank, ditches the stuff, and heads for the road. That still doesn't explain how they got to me."

"I know. There's only one way to figure that, and I don't like it."

"The sheriff! He had my address!"

"Right. Or his deputy. He's the one who didn't see the body."

"So we take the stuff—two hundred grand—to the sheriff? A guy who might be part of this mess?"

"Right. But we make a call first."

So we did, or Mike did. Just inside the By Pass town line there's a service station, the old fashioned kind with a guy that pumps gas for you and even washes your windows and checks your oil. Mike made his call, and I paid a guy to do all that other stuff. Then we drove to the sheriff's office. It was just where I remembered it was. It was dark enough now that it even looked the same. The only difference was the weather—it wasn't raining—and the truck parked in front, a green Chevy three quarter ton, with blotches of red primer.

"I don't like it, Mike," I said.

"I don't either," he said. "Or maybe I do."

"Huh?"

"Look how everything's falling into place. Here's the two guys who trashed your house and your car, making a visit to the sheriff, who may or may not be their friend. Here's us with a kilo of uncut cocaine, the very thing they're looking for. In half an hour or so an agent from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration will be here to take possession."

"It might be smart to wait here in the car till the agent gets here."

Mike gave me that look again, head bent forward, eyes looking up through his eyebrows, smirk on his mouth—only this time he was the crazy one. Only a fool would walk into that office under the circumstances. We got out of the car together. Mike noticed I was carrying the brick.

"Ought to leave that in the car," he said.

"No way," I said. "Things disappear from cars in this town. I speak from experience."

"Right," he said. We went in.

It was the same well-lit office and the same Formica counter, the same old sheriff and the same young deputy. The sheriff and Leon looked surprised to see me, but not as surprised as the two other men. They were boys, really, seventeen or eight-

een. They hadn't seemed so young when I'd seen them driving by the Maple Leaf in their pickup. Now they looked like the country boys you see all across south Louisiana, lean, wiry, happy-faced Cajuns who can handle any kind of boat and make it go where there are lots of catfish or crabs or crawfish or shrimp and bring it back full. Only there was nothing happy-faced about these boys. They were scared witless.

"Mr. Andrew! What in hell you doin' back here, huh?"

"Hello, sheriff," I said. I put the brick on the counter. "My friend Mike here tells me this is a brick of pure cocaine. We found it about half an hour ago near where I picked that guy up last night. Mike called the U.S. Drug Enforcement people, and they're sending an agent. He should be here soon, to pick this up. I don't know what those two boys are doing here, but early this morning they broke into my car and tore it all to hell. Then this afternoon, when I was having a beer with my buddy Mike, these two did the same to my apartment. Mike and me both saw them. They followed us in their Chevy pickup. I figure one of them shot that man last night."

"Whooooowhee!" The sheriff sniffed the air. "You been havin' some beers, I gar-ron-tee! I hope your buddy's been doin' the

driving!" He wasn't exactly smiling when he said it. "An' you tell me one a' these here boys shoot up ol' Raymon Terrebonne? I don't know about dat. These boys here is pretty good at shootin' dem rabbits, but I can't hardly believe they'd be shootin' at their buddy Raymon." The sheriff limped over toward the two boys while he talked. "No sir, these here two, these are some good boys." The boys relaxed a little. Then the sheriff slapped one of them across the face and backhanded the other.

I'd never seen anyone struck that hard with an open hand. The sheriff didn't look old and tired any more. With the sound of the slapping still in the air, the sheriff pushed the two boys backwards. They sat down hard on a wooden bench against the wall.

The sheriff talked: "Now you two boys listen. Las' night I had to call up Raymon's papa an' tell him his boy is dead. I know him a long time. Both you boys, I know your papas and your mamas, too. I don' want to call them and tell them I sent you two to Angola. No sir. So tell me what happened last night to your buddy Raymon."

One of the boys said, "I swear, sheriff, we don' know nothin' about what happen . . ."

Another slap. It was so hard I could feel it, but the boy felt

it more. His face started to swell, and tears ran down the swelling.

"I'll tell you, sheriff." It was the other boy. "Me an' T-John here, an' Raymon, lass week we was over by Lake Misere, jus' off the bayou—you know where that's at?" The sheriff nodded. T-John wept softly. The other boy told the story in a soft Cajun accent, part French, and part Louisiana country. "Anyway, we lookin' for some nutrea sign, see? We gonna trap an' get us some good pelts. We gotta license. So we see a big shrimp boat back in thar. T-John says hey looka that, an' I start laughin'. Everyone knows there ain't no shrimp in Lake Misere. But Raymon ain' laughin', no he ain'. He shuts down the motor, and we drift over behind an ol' cypress and watch. They gots about six cars they loadin' that boat into, and it ain' shrimp they loadin', I guarantee. So Raymon gets this idea. He figure they gotta come down the bayou to get to the lake, and he figure they gotta do it at night. So we watch the bayou a few nights, an' we see 'em. We got the pirogue in the back of the truck. The shrimper is runnin' with no lights, real slow. His motor was runnin' loud, too, so we paddle over by it in the pirogue. It's dark an' rainin' good. Raymon figures he can get on, grab somethin', an' get off quick,

and we pick him up. Only they saw him or heard him or somethin'. There's yellin' an' shootin'. Raymon jumps over on the other side of the boat, an' they still shootin'. Then the shrimp boat puts on some speed. We lookin' for Raymon, but we don' see him. Then we cross the bayou an' check the other side from where we left the truck, an' we see him thumbin' down dis man's car. So we get back to the truck an' cross over on the drawbridge, and we finally see the car out front of here, with Raymon dead inside. We get scared an' take him out of the car—we afraid he got the stuff on him and you gonna find out we always together, like you did. Then Leon comes out and looks in the car while we got Raymon behind the boat shed. So we got more scared an' put him back. Then we figure dis guy got the stuff off Raymon when he was weak or dead an' it don' seem right for him to have it after Raymon got shot an' everything, so we follow him to New Orleans an' still don' find nothing. So we come back an' everyone knows Raymon is dead an' everyone lookin' for us, so Leon brings us in here. That's the truth, sheriff, I swear."

The other boy, T-John, had stopped crying. The sheriff's voice was soothing again, the way it was with me the night

before. "Okay, you boys, okay. You in some trouble, but we'll see if maybe we can't keep you out of Angola." The sheriff pulled off T-John's cap and messed up his hair. "It'll be all right. Go in thar an' call you folks."

Leon took the boys in back to use the phone. The sheriff looked old and tired again. He said, "Those boys, they broke into your car an' your house. What they took?"

I shook my head. "Nothing, sheriff. They just tore everything all to hell." I didn't say it mad. I just said it because it was true.

"Well, what if I get them boys to pay you for what they tore up?"

"Sheriff, it's all right, I'd just as soon . . ."

"No, they gotta do something. They got in over their heads, an' their buddy got killed. They were stupid, an' maybe they'll be smarter now. That shrimp boat with them dopers is bound to be long gone, but maybe they can tell that government man what it looked

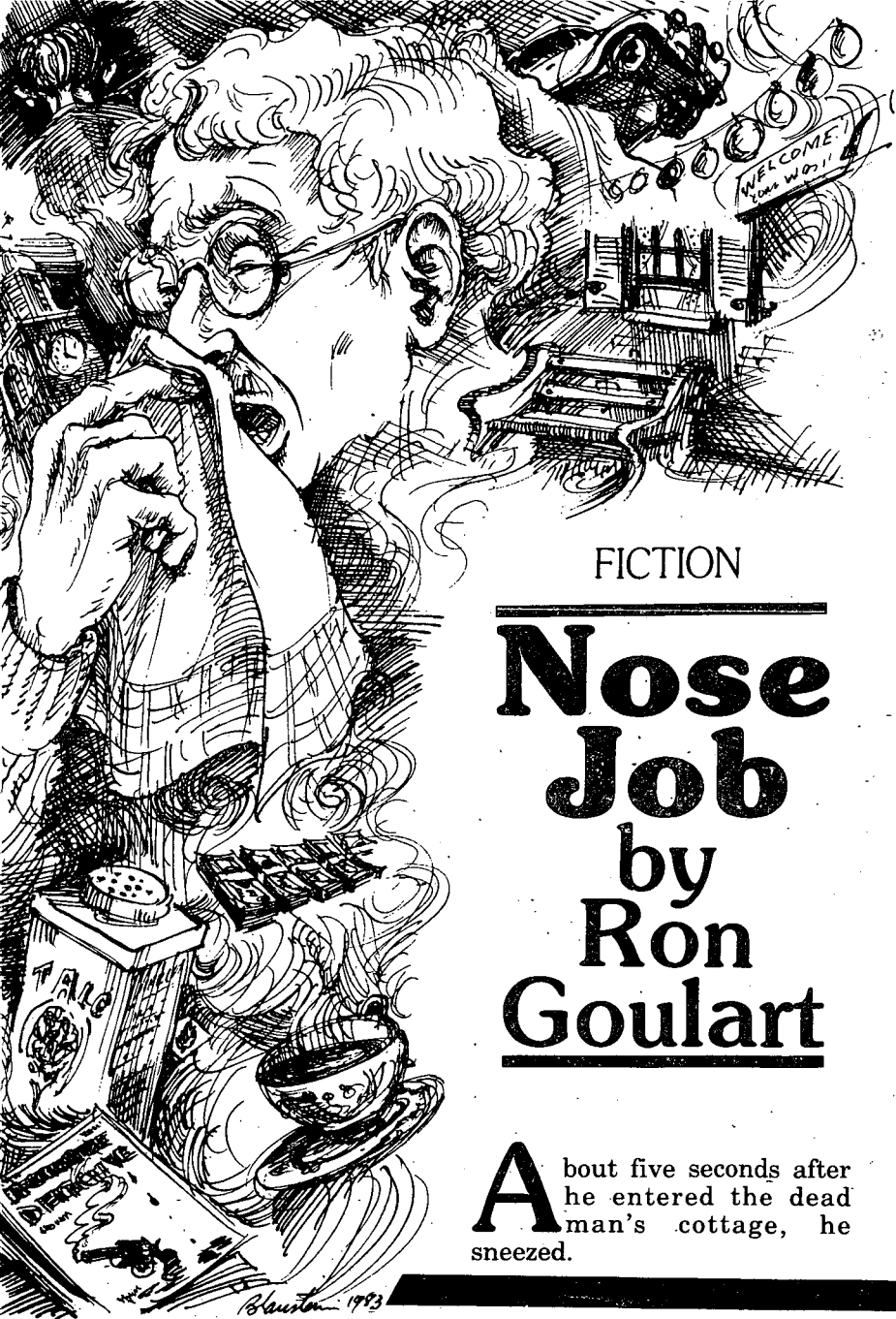
like. That'll be good. But they got to pay for what they did to you. It ain' right to be breakin' into a man's house."

"Well, they tore up my Cutlass pretty bad. Hell, I don't know." I didn't. I felt pretty sorry for those boys. They were just young and stupid and their buddy was dead. The sheriff said he'd make sure they got me some new upholstery for my car if I wouldn't press any charges. I wouldn't have pressed any charges anyway.

Then the government agent came and did all the things he had to do. It didn't take him long to be finished with me and Mike.

As we were leaving, Leon took me aside. "See?" he said, "I tol' you there weren't no dead guy in dat car!" I just nodded. What could I say?

Mike and I drove back to New Orleans. I was a day late for my coming-in-from-offshore-drunk, but I made up for it, let me tell you. I woke up on my living room floor, next to a pile of Tammy Wynette records, feeling like I was in Cleveland.



FICTION

Nose Job by Ron Goulart

About five seconds after he entered the dead man's cottage, he sneezed.

He took a few more steps across the threadbare carpet and sneezed twice again. Les Moyles halted, frowning. It was a chill autumn morning, and the living room-bedroom had a grey, fuzzy look. This cottage, just like his, had a rickety desk against one wall. Les noticed the manila folder he'd come for sitting on the desk, but he didn't go over there.

Instead, sniffing, head tilted forward, he skirted the unmade bed and went toward the partially open closet. "Yep, I was right," he muttered, squatting and tugging out a pair of venerable canvas sneakers. "Fresh paint."

Checking the ribbed soles of the shoes, he found they were faintly smeared with yellow. While he was holding them, he sneezed three more times.

Les shook his head, dropped the shoes, and stood. This wasn't what he was here to—

"Things really are tough in the paperback field, huh? So bad you've fallen to looting a corpse."

"Roy L. Coolbaum's corpse is in the Campus Funeral Home eleven long miles from here." Les gave the small, slim, red-haired young woman in the doorway a sour look. "Good morning, Miss Millian."

"You'll never be much of a

housebreaker as long as you have that cold," Anne Millian said. "I could hear you way over in my place, two cottages from—"

"I suffer from allergies," he explained, taking out a key and dangling it in her direction. "The people who are putting on this nitwit New England Aspiring Writers' Conference know I'm here. Coolbaum was supposed to run a panel at two in the Main Conference Room. Being dead, he can't do that, and they asked me to get his notes and fill in for—"

"A housebreaker with hay-fever is even worse," observed Anne, still leaning in the doorway.

"I read one of your books once, even though I'm no longer a young adult," Les dropped the key into a pocket of his wind-breaker. "It was entitled *Seven Months Pregnant*, and it was full of same kind of snide wit you're using to kid my ailment."

"*Six Months Pregnant*," she corrected. "I've read ninety-four of your books, Moyles, and didn't find any evidence of wit, snide or otherwise."

"Go away," he suggested, moving to the desk. "Go conduct a workshop or something."

"My next one isn't until three. Juveniles, Young Adults, and

How To Write for Them,' " she said as she stepped across the threshold. She was wearing a pair of faded jeans and a striped shirt. "Scheduled opposite your workshop on 'How To Be a Hack Writer for Fun and Profit.' "

"Go next door and heckle Roscoe Garcia, he's only written one novel so far," said Les, reaching for the manila folder.

"I really have read all your books, Les," she told him. "That's why I was anxious to do this conference and meet you. Actually, you're not a bad writer. If you'd slow down and use your brain a bit—"

"I make a hundred thousand dollars a year," he said. "If I were to use my brain I'd probably . . . huh . . ." He brought the folder up to his nose and sniffed at it. "Damn, that's . . . odd."

"What is? The smell of a folder?"

Ignoring her, Les took a few more sniffs and then returned the folder to the desk top. "But that's definitely what the odor is. Brake fluid."

Anne came over, bent, and sniffed. "I don't smell a darn thing."

"Most people don't."

"Then how come you do?"

"If I tell you about another of my flaws, you'll just kid me about that, too."

"I won't, honestly."

"Well, a few months ago I

started going to an allergist by the name of Dr. Handelsmann, over in Connecticut where I live. He—"

"I've heard of him. He's been on television."

"That doesn't mean anything. They'd put Jack the Ripper on there. Anyway, Handelsmann tried some bizarre new allergy testing methods on me and the result is . . . well, I'm now hypersensitive to an incredibly wide range of smells and odors."

"It hasn't slowed your career." She sat in the lopsided armchair. "Your macho men's paperbacks keep coming out one after another. *Captain Gladiator*, *Captain Gladiator Against Nero*, *Captain Glad—*"

"The point is," he cut in, tapping the folder, "Coolbaum's papers were handled recently by somebody who'd gotten brake fluid on himself."

"So?"

Les said, "How did Coolbaum die? Last night, while supposedly driving into town from the campus of Wooley Junior College here, he didn't quite make the turn at Suicide Curve. Car went shooting over a three hundred foot drop and smashed. Along with Coolbaum."

The young woman shivered. "It's not something to dwell on."

"Yeah, but suppose . . . suppose the fluid had been drained out of his brakes?"

"Why would he do that? It's sure a crazy way to commit suicide."

"It's not suicide I'm talking about." Les backed off from her and the desk. "This could be murder."

Anne snapped her fingers. "You did something like this before," she remembered. "Yes, a friend sent me a clipping from a Connecticut newspaper. You used your nostrils to solve a murder, on a yacht. They called you a Private Nose." She smiled, shaking her head. "That must've been good publicity for you, even though you write under all kinds of dippy pennames like Bat Palfry, J.J. Brutus, and Josephine Kains. But that was most likely a fluke, and now you figure to whip up more publicity by pretend—"

"It was no fluke," he said, voice going up a bit. "I figured out who did it. Using my particular talent for smelling out all sorts of—"

"That's not a talent," Anne said. "A talent is where you can sing or dance or write, not when you go poking around like a human bloodhound."

He went over to the unmade bed. "Why'd Coolbaum get out of bed at eleven o'clock last night and decide to drive into town?"

"There are lots of saloons in town," she answered. "I've heard that Coolbaum, despite all the

law and order books and articles he did, was quite a carouser and saloon brawler."

"I read his *How To Catch. Ax Murderers Before They Act*. Granted it was no *Six Months Pregnant*, but even—"

"What say we call a truce, Les?" She stood up. "I won't tell you I like your books, and you won't tell me you loathe mine. Okay?"

Nodding absently, he crouched down next to the bedside table. A small one-legged brass clock was ticking away forlornly. Les sniffed at the cleared area of the table, frowning. He glanced up at nothing in particular, drumming the fingers of his right hand on the table.

"What now?" inquired Anne, eyeing him. "You don't mind if I play Nora to your Nick, do you? Long as we—"

"Hush," he advised, getting his nose even closer to the table. "Old books? Nope, not quite. Old newspaper? . . . No. It's old magazines. But something else . . . glue and imitation leather. Sitting right here on this table recently." Straightening, he gestured at the girl. "Poke around and see if you can't find a bound volume of old magazines somewhere here."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

He shrugged. "Don't know. I'm just curious as to what he

was reading in bed and where it went."

Her shrug echoed his. "Okay, sahib." She began searching the room, peeking under the armchairs, bending to look beneath the rumpled bed.

"What've you been sitting in?"

"Beg pardon?"

Les nodded at her left buttock. "Yellow paint stain."

"Oh, that's from the bench outside my cottage. Some thoughtful person painted it just before we all arrived yesterday morning," Anne replied. "I'm a shade nearsighted, and I perched right on it without realizing. Could you scent it on me?"

"I'm allergic to most paint." He commenced going through the desk drawers. They were all empty.

As he tugged out the lowest one, he sneezed.

"Is my backside doing that to you?" she inquired from in front of the closet.

"Nope." He knelt so he could take a whiff of the handle of the drawer. "More brake fluid and . . . something else. I know that smell . . . what the hell is it? Powder . . . not face powder . . . talcum . . . but not quite . . . yeah, it's talc. But something's unusual about it."

"No books or magazines in the closet," announced Anne. "Except for six copies of Cool-

baum's latest hardcover, *Murder Most True*."

"Hum?"

"No bound volumes of anything." She brushed her palms together. "You find anything?"

Les worked his thumb knuckle across the top of his nose. "I guess not, no."

"Then why not grab those notes you came for, and we can steal away. I'll treat you to a soft drink in the campus cafeteria."

Les sat down in the armchair next to the coffee table. "Somebody drains the brake fluid out of Coolbaum's car. Then, when they know he's dead, they come in here and search for something," he said, mostly to himself. "But what?"

"Maybe nothing. After all, you admit you're the only one who can notice most of these scents. Could it be you're exaggerating the—"

"Peppermint."

"What?"

He was leaning over the coffee table, nose wrinkled. "There's a strong scent of peppermint on this thing."

"Coolbaum probably set a roll of candy there."

"Nope. He considered candy and sugar a major cause of heart disease."

"Well, it occurs to me a lot of people use these guest cottages in the course of an academic year, Les, so—"

"The scent is fresh, not more than a day old." After a few seconds he sighed, shook his head, and stood.

"We departing?"

"Might as well."

"And you aren't going to tell the police what you suspect, are you?"

"No." He headed for the doorway.

"Good, because actually—"

"Not yet."

Professor Norbert Kreech stopped pacing his office. "You're the first person to mention that I smell of peppermint," he said to Les. "Though I suppose I do. It's the medicine I take for my stomach."

Les, sitting in a straight-backed chair next to the office's one window, sniffed again. "Never mind," he said, "it's the wrong peppermint."

"What makes you think so? My physician assures me—"

"Wrong smell, I meant. Let's get back to what we—"

"The damn stuff better work," said the large, rawboned Kreech. "Having one of our conference authors murdered is really going to aggravate my insides. What with the police, the regents, the media—"

"I'm not sure there's been a murder," Les told him. "But I have the feeling something unusual—"

"Could you perhaps forget the whole notion, Mr. Moyles?" Kreech glanced down at the grey midday campus. "We've been having these annual New England Aspiring Writers' Conferences for six years now and are finally commencing to get into the black. A murder will just—"

"May not be a murder. But can you give me a bit of background on the people involved with this year's—"

"Oh, we've had a few fist-fights in the past, several in fact. And some adultery, which is only to be expected," said Kreech as he watched the leaves fall free of the white maple outside his window. "A murder, however, is something else again."

"I was curious, for instance, as to why Mrs. Coolbaum has her own cottage, and one not near her husband's."

"That." Professor Kreech returned to his desk and sat down to face Les. "Actually Nina and Roy are separated. In a way that's a result of our conferences. Last year's, in fact. The Coolbaums attended, as did Sandy Foe." He coughed into his fist. "Sandy and Nina . . . um . . . hit it off. Behind Roy's back, initially. Sandy's not my sort of writer, yet there's no denying his *The Code and the Codicil* is a very popular thriller. It was on the

New York *Times* list for forty-six weeks."

"Forty-nine," corrected Les. "How come, all things considered, Foe and both the Coolbaums were invited back again for this year's go-round?"

"Foe is a big name, he draws attendees. So does . . . so did Roy," replied the professor. "And Nina's children's books do very well. Her workshop yesterday morning on 'Writing for the Wee Ones' was very well attended."

"At the party yesterday afternoon," said Les, "everyone seemed amiable."

Nodding, Kreech said, "Thank God, yes. These meet-the-authors things, where the aspiring writers mingle with the professionals, have been the scene of some of our most embarrassing brawls in years past. Two years ago, for example, Arlo Zane and—"

"Anyone here at the conference besides Foe who might dislike Roy Coolbaum?"

"We've no evidence Foe didn't like him," pointed out Kreech, picking up a conference brochure from his desk.

"Anyone else a repeat from last year?"

After scanning the first page of the brochure, Kreech shook his head. "Once we have our big names, we like to invite new writers each year. Lesser known, perhaps, such as yourself. Not

that your *Captain Centurion* novels aren't well written and—"

"*Captain Gladiator*."

"To be sure," agreed the professor.

"So none of the other participants knew Coolbaum?"

"I don't believe so, no." Kreech ran a blunt finger along the list. "You didn't. Miss Millian didn't, I'm sure. No, because I recall her asking me to introduce her at our party yesterday. And Roscoe Garcia's only just turned pro and has never been at one of our affairs before." He leaned back and gave a satisfied smile. "Roscoe lives in Phelpsville, has for several years. Which makes him a local boy who's made good. Local man, since he's in his late thirties. Have you read his marvelous first novel, *Too Late the Milk Wagon*?"

"Nope. Garcia's never met Coolbaum before?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Kreech. "I'm quite proud of Roscoe, since he's the product of one of my extended-ed night courses. I had feared he was going to be another of those who keep taking creative writing courses and never getting anywhere; the courses themselves become just a hobby. But Roscoe has finally taken off, and I'm delighted I was able, after two years of trying, to persuade him to do a workshop for us.

He's been very helpful, arriving a day early and even helping us blow up all the balloons for the party yesterday."

"The balloons were nice." Les stood up. "Thanks for your time."

The professor got out of his chair, watching Les. "Miss Milian seems a fascinating young woman."

"She is, yes."

"I noticed you and her strolling on campus earlier." He moved to the door and opened it. "Perhaps you'll let her distract you and forget this murder notion of yours."

"Perhaps."

"Hard to believe, isn't it?" asked Sandy Foe with a wry chuckle. He slid a hand into a pocket of his mink overcoat. "Me reading your stuff when I was a kid, almost. No accounting for taste."

Les and the bestselling thriller writer were walking across the Wooley Junior College campus, along a maple-lined lane. "Makes me right proud," said Les, "to have inspired you."

"Your stuff isn't bad," said the twenty-seven-year-old author, chuckling again. "But it's a trap, Les, writing garbage all your life. You have to break free. Maybe you can't write something as big as *The Code and the Codicil* yet—"

"What's that you're putting on your hands?"

"Eh?" Foe had taken a small tin of talcum powder from his coat pocket and was sprinkling it on his palms. "Baby powder. I perspire a lot, my hands do. This helps."

Les's nose wrinkled, then he gave a negative shake of his head. "The reason I wanted to talk to you, Sandy, is—"

"The old prof already told me, old buddy." Foe dusted the talcum away. "You suspect foul play in the death of poor Roy. Not a bad plot, really. You could call it *Murder Goes to College*. That has a nice dated sound and maybe—"

"You and Coolbaum weren't buddies."

"We weren't exactly enemies, either. Breaking up his marriage, I did him a favor," said Foe. "Want a mint?" He produced a roll from another pocket of his mink.

Les took one, held it near his nose for a few seconds, and then tossed it into a hedge. "How a favor?"

"Roy was fifty-six. Nina's thirty-one. Never marry a lady that much younger than you. How old are you anyway?"

"Thirty-five."

"Is that all?"

"You chatted with Coolbaum at the party."

Foe said, "I can get along with anyone. It's a knack that

earning ridiculous amounts of money bestows on you. Not now, miss, sorry. See me later." A hopeful college girl had come up to him with a copy of his novel held out for an autograph. "Fact of the matter is, Roy didn't hang around the doings all that long. He left after about half an hour."

"I didn't notice."

"Have to do better than that if you're going to be a successful sleuth, old buddy." Foe chuckled. "Yes, Roy became very agitated and excited, but at the same time a bit sly looking. He went dashing out of that gathering of the literary great and near-great, looking unsettled and a shade smug."

"You don't know where he went?"

"Roy's ramblings don't... didn't interest me."

Les said, "Thanks for answering my questions."

"If you decide to try a big book, get in touch. Be glad to help you put it together, Les."

"Appreciate that." He left him under an oak tree.

"Here, go ahead and smell them," invited Nina Coolbaum.

"Much obliged." He leaned forward and took a sniff at the handful of children's books she thrust out at him. "Peppermint."

"What else ought a scratch and sniff kiddie book entitled *Granny Smellyskunk and the Peppermint Penguins* to smell like? Don't answer that." She withdrew the books and tucked them up under one arm. She was a plump, attractive woman. Blonde at the moment. Les had encountered her as he trotted up the steps of the campus library. "You've been handling paint lately, too," he said.

"You're certainly perceptive, Mr. Moyles. I happened to put my hand on a tacky bench outside my cottage. Some nurf had recently painted the thing." She studied him, head tilted to one side. "At another time I might find your behavior somewhat bizarre and even goofy, but I'm distracted right now."

"As a new widow I can imagine—"

"I'm not mourning Roy. By me that schlep could've gone to his reward six or seven years ago," she said. "No, I'm ticked off because the Wooley Junior College library just rejected my offer to donate these books of mine to their dippy library. Some librarian with a body like a coatrack told me I might bring them back in a month when they'll have the donation box out for their annual jumble sale."

"Any notion why your husband wanted to drive into town last night?" ~

"He was up to no good."

"What do you mean?"

"I lived with him for countless years, didn't I? Had to listen to him read all his dippy first, second, and even third drafts to me. Imagine rewriting that goop of his three and four times and still only getting it to sound like the copy on a bottle of horse liniment. Where was I?"

"He was up to no good," prompted Les.

"Exactly. Well, I'd come to know that look on his pudgy face . . . imagine living into your sixties without losing your baby fat. When he left that god-awful party yesterday I could see by his face that . . . Can you see anybody having *fun* at a gathering where ninety percent of the guests want to be writers? And they have balloons dangling just about everywhere?"

"Your husband gave you the impression he was up to something?"

"Let's start calling him my *late* husband, shall we?" she suggested. "Yes, I really believe the old dear was cooking up something. Either he was off to meet someone secretly, or he was tracking down a story. One of those dreadful true crime yarns he specialized in. Here, why don't I give you one of these. Be less for me to lug around."

Les accepted a copy of *Grandma Smellyskunk and the Peppermint Penguins*. "Do you think—"

"I'll autograph it later. I have to run." She turned away and went hurrying down the steps.

Les went on up to the library.

A small afternoon wind was whispering along the brown corridor outside the room where, in less than sixty seconds, Les was supposed to be starting his next writing workshop. Shoulders slightly hunched, he was talking into a wall phone. "C'mon, Norm," he urged, "stay awake."

"I'm awake. I must be, because I never dream about you," said Norm Sandler. "Speak."

"This is an immense favor I want you to do for—"

"No money. I won't do you any favors that involve an outlay of cash."

"I don't need money. This—"

"Then how about lending me a hundred? Maximus Comics won't be paying again until next Friday and—"

"Here's what I want you to do. Go down to—"

"Fifty?"

"Attend to my words, Norm. That's what pals are for."

"Continue. What low and degrading chore do you have in mind for me?"

"You work in the Maximus Comics bullpen. But Maximus

also has a magazine division upstairs from you that turns out *Accurate Detective* and *Sensation Detective*. True crime mags."

"True thus far. But why are you calling Manhattan from all the way up there in—"

"Go down there. You can get into the Maximus building on Saturday with no trouble," Les said, fishing a slip of paper out of his hip pocket. "Look in the back files of *Accurate Detective* for—"

"You're asking me to go voluntarily into that sinkhole on my day off?"

"Yes. Get hold of the volume of *Accurate* that has the January through March, 1971, issues in it."

"Then what?"

"I'm not exactly certain, but go over those three issues. Check out all the articles, especially any written by Roy L. Coolbaum. Coolbaum. I'm especially interested in stuff about criminals, murderers or otherwise, who might be at large. Or who were at that time, anyway. Also make a note of anything about anyone who answers the descriptions I'm going to give you next."

"Do I get a prize if I come up with the right answer?"

"You get my undying affection. Now listen to these descriptions." He took another slip of paper from his pocket.

Three of his prospective pupils, impatient, were watching him from the workshop doorway.

Les sat on a weak-kneed wrought iron chair in the small patio beside Roscoe Garcia's cottage, twisting a deflated balloon around his fingers. Twilight had come drifting across the campus a few minutes ago, and it was surrounding the dorms and the guest cottages.

Garcia was a tall, dark man in his late thirties. He was just shy of being handsome, but his ears were large and prominent. He sat opposite Les, smiling, a cup of tea in his hand. "Sure you don't want any, Mr. Moyles?"

"Nope, thanks. What kind did you say it was?"

"Peppermint," replied Garcia. "One of my favorites. I kicked the real tea habit about five years ago, and I'm glad of it. But, heck, I don't imagine you came over here to talk about my little habits." He looked at the darkening ground and laughed shyly. "How can I help you?"

"Just wanted to talk with you."

"Gee, I'm flattered." Garcia looked up as he sipped his tea. "I've read about a dozen of your books, and I'll tell you something, Mr. Moyles. You're a

heck of a better writer than somebody like Sandy Foe."

"Thanks." Far across the campus a bell tower sounded the hour. "I've been devoting quite a bit of my time to looking into Coolbaum's death."

"Wasn't that a darn shame? Such a gifted man." Garcia gave a sad shake of his head. "I am pleased, though, that they didn't decide to cancel the conference. That would've spoiled things for a lot of people."

"Funny thing about balloons," said Les, tossing his empty one in the air a few times. "I remember reading a muckraking article about how they use talcum inside them, to keep the rubber from sticking, I think. The talc they use has a particular odor all its own. Not like baby powder or deodorants." He touched the balloon to his nostrils. Sneezed twice.

"That's interesting. The sort of information you could use in one of your mystery novels, maybe." The dusk was closing in on Garcia, blurring him, softening him around the edges.

"The person who searched Coolbaum's cottage after he'd died had been handling this kind of talc," said Les. "I got this balloon from the decorations used for our party yesterday. I knew I'd noticed this smell someplace recently."

"You know, Mr. Moyles, I

don't quite follow this conversation any more. I'm honored that an old pro like yourself would come and talk with me, but—"

"You're a very helpful guy," Les told him. "You volunteered to help set up for the . . ." He sneezed three more times. "Excuse me. You blew up several dozen balloons."

"Glad to be of service."

"When you did, you got talc on your hands. Some of it stuck."

Garcia's features were now lost in the growing darkness. "Hey," he said with a gentle laugh, "are you suggesting I ransacked Mr. Coolbaum's cottage or what?"

"You did that, yes," said Les. "After you'd doctored his car. I figure you jobbed the car and then called him to set up a meeting in town. To talk over terms undisturbed."

"Terms of what; Mr. Moyles?"

"Blackmail, I'd guess." He leaned slightly forward. "Coolbaum didn't tell anybody about recognizing you, so he must've decided to hit you for money first. That was what you must've talked over when he had you over to his cottage early last night."

"I was never in Mr. Coolbaum's cott—"

"Sure you were. You sat at the coffee table, and while you talked you drank a cup of your peppermint tea that you'd

brought along," said Les. "When you first went over there, you didn't know what he was going to spring on you, so you were still playing at being clean living Roscoe Garcia."

Garcia's soft laughter came out of the darkness. "I am Roscoe Garcia and nobody else."

"Coolbaum wasn't sure at first," continued Les. "You've had your face altered but not those ears. Something tipped him off at the party yesterday afternoon, and he took a bound volume of old issues of *Accurate Detective* out of the college library. He'd written an article that had to do with you back in 1971, and once he saw that again he was sure."

"Me? Why would he want to write about me, since back then I wasn't anybody?"

"But you were," disagreed Les. "You were Roger Grange then. One of San Francisco's most respected young brokers. Handsome, big-eared Roger Grange, who strolled out of the offices of Goldstone & Sons one bright afternoon with one million five hundred thousand dollars in money and negotiable bonds not his own."

Garcia sipped his tea and said nothing at all.

"When Coolbaum got another look at the old pictures of you in that back issue, he was convinced," Les went on. "But to make absolutely sure, he

snuck over here and peeked at you through your window." He pointed into the darkness. "He stood on that bench over there to get a good look inside. That's how he got yellow paint on his sneakers. He later summoned you to an audience at his cottage. How much did he ask for?"

Garcia laughed. "Half of it," he said quietly. "Can you imagine? He actually wanted seven hundred and fifty thousand. I've lived modestly and invested well, but I had no intention of giving that kind of sum away."

"Why'd you write the novel and come out in the open?"

Garcia's gentle shrug was nearly lost in the darkness. "Been a long time since I left San Francisco," he replied. "At times one gets bored. I suppose there was a bit of vanity involved in the whole business, too—writing the book and coming here. And then I really didn't expect to be spotted. I'll have to have more done with these damned ears of mine."

"It's unlikely you're going to be able to consult another plastic surgeon."

"Just sit right there, Mr. Moyles. I can kill you or not, but I'd rather not."

Les said, "You haven't got a gun."

"You can't see anything in this light."

"I'd smell one if you had it."

Garcia said, "That's a very gifted nose you have. Too bad it can't smell this hunting knife." His chair made a faint screeching noise as he pushed it back and stood.

"You don't have a gun, but I do," announced the voice of Anne Millian.

Garcia swung around to face her.

Les jumped him.

He hit Garcia twice before the knife dropped to the ground. Three more times and Garcia sighed and fell.

"That wasn't bad," said the young woman, moving toward him. "Where'd you learn to punch like that?"

"Research for a paperback series I did once. You don't really have a gun."

"No, but it seemed like an apt thing to say."

"How'd you get here when

you did?"

"I'd been hunting for you, and then I heard you sneeze," she answered, taking his arm. "Just as I was about to barge in, I became aware of what you two were saying. I decided to pause and eavesdrop for a spell."

He said, "Could you step into his cottage and call the police while I watch him?"

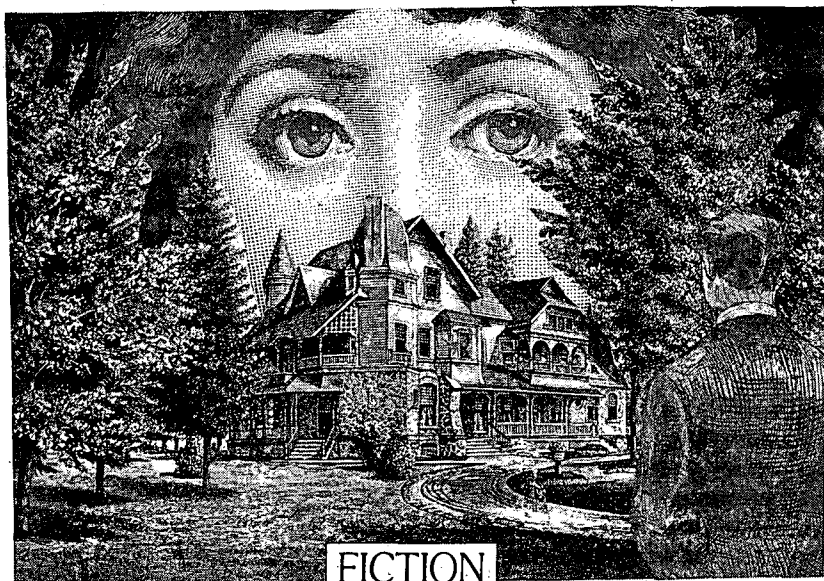
"Certainly," she said. "And, oh, I'm sorry I maligned your nasal abilities. You really are pretty darn good at this sort of thing. Can I buy you a drink in town?"

"As soon as we..." He stopped, sneezed twice. "Are you wearing a new perfume?"

"Yes. Very chic stuff."

Sneezing once again, Les took a few steps away from her. "Call the police, wash off that perfume," he said, "and then we'll have dinner."

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FICTION

Earl Crawford —My Ambition —English I by Pauline C. Smith

“**T**here has never been a murder in this town,” declares my husband, who is a councilman and therefore very big on law and order. I listen without comment. “No hanky panky either,” he adds because, being an elder in the church, he also bears down on moral rectitude and has either forgotten or refuses to remember, now that it is all over. I listen, again without

comment, but I remember because I was in it from the beginning and there at the end.

In every small town there is always one subject that, after all the others are chewed to shreds, is still good for a couple of tch-tch's and a whispered, "such goings-on!"

Marjorie Pollock-Earl Crawford was ours. One was never mentioned without the other, as if they were hyphenated. Linked together that way, they provided a durable behind-the-hand scandal for many years—actually from the time they finished college, when she took over the third grade and he hung out his attorney-at-law shingle. On the face of it, everything was very proper, almost dull, but those two were neither.

It is I who tell this story because it is only I who know exactly why and what happened.

The reason I know so much is that I am what is called a "good listener." People say to me, "Cora, you really are a good listener," then they prove it.

Being a good listener is something like having a heart of gold; it's not really a compliment, but a thing people pull out in desperation when they want to say something nice.

Listening, however, remembering, and putting it all together, makes me the only one in town who really knows about Marjorie and Earl. And Eureka, too. No one else knows Eureka even came into it, but she did.

She was the focal point.

And she was the finish.

Eureka lived in one of the two stately old Victorian houses that front the park, but it is only stately now in a rickety sort of way, like an aristocratic old lady whose bombazine skirts have grown rusty. Eureka had gone to seed, too. You wouldn't have thought, looking at her during the last few years, that she was once a swinger. But she was. She was also the pride and the glory of the Ballantines, who had been sure they would never have a child when along came Eureka!

I knew all three of them in high school, and I well remember Earl's freshman English essay on "My Ambition," although I have forgotten all the others, including my own, that we read aloud with cautious defiance. I remember how Earl looked that day as he stood before the class, shabby and neglected but with a hunched, absorbed intensity, pinpointed on his own cramped handwriting, pres-

sure-tight, so serious and dedicated to it he never heard the snickers while he read. Everyone laughed except Marjorie.

It was Earl's ambition, he read from his paper, to live elegantly and with finesse. "Gracious living," he called it, with all its grandeur and ceremony and richness—the works. He did not reveal how he would attain this princely state. He said only that he wanted it and would get it.

He must have already been eyeing Eureka as a means to the end, and Marjorie backed him all the way. When you know whom he came from and out of what violent part of town he crawled, it is not hard to understand Earl's obsession. Down there, it's the dregs, the very bottom of the bottle. His mother must have given up the struggle long before, and his old man poured down a final drink in Earl's sophomore year, which brought Earl up one step because it changed his sleeping quarters from a shack to the furnace room of the Ballantine Building where he already cleaned out the offices in the evenings and on Saturdays.

Earl must have dreamed a lot of dreams in the heat of that furnace, and he must have told them all to Marjorie on the Pollock front porch.

When he left school after sixth period and walked toward his duties at the Ballantine Building, and when he left the Ballantine Building to walk toward the Pollocks', Earl always took the long way around—clear around the park, where he paused and slowed his steps and wishful-thought his way past those Victorian houses.

The showplaces at that time, the estates, the mansions if you will, were those two Victorian piles on the park side. One belonged to the Ballantine parents of Eureka and the other to her Ballantine aunt and uncle. Those houses, to Earl, were the beginning, the end, and all the middle of his "gracious living."

Even during the ranch era out east of town, and on through the slabbed moderns, functional as atomic plants, on the west, Earl never changed his allegiance. Those party-cake Victorians, frosted with turrets, were the ultimate. They were for him.

So he turned to Marjorie, who directed his tottering footsteps, and she was just the one to do it. Sturdy, short-legged, as common as bread, with a brain that could have tossed half itself out the window and still been able to out-think anyone else, Marjorie took over the task, for she was in love with him with an all-encompassing love—sweetheart, wife, and mother, a little of each of these and all of them.

And the goal, the ambition? Why, that was Eureka. What else? She had the family, the background, the money, the air, and the house. Except, there was one hitch in the setup. Marjorie. A mind as tenacious as hers and a heart as possessive was not likely to let Eureka loose on Earl.

Also, there was Eureka. Does a princess consort with a galley slave? Well no, not while he's in the galley, at least.

But Earl, with an eye on his destination and an ear pointed to the suggestions of his superior, never once thought of these possible variables. He sat on Marjorie's front porch with his thin arms wound around the newel post and asked her what he should do to become the man Eureka would be most likely to take into her way of life.

"Well," said Marjorie, "those kinds of people like athletes in their family. It gives a good bloodline and something to show off. They like brains, too. It keeps the money from dribbling away." I heard it because I was sitting in the dark on my own porch next door.

So from that tip, the scrawny little kid with no heritage except the worst became a star athlete of the school and its valedictorian, too. Every time he won a game and every time he topped the honor roll, he'd pant, "Now, huh? How about now, Marjorie? Can I ask her for a date now?"

"Now?" And I could hear the contempt clear across both lawns, and yes, the protection in her voice, too. "Of course not now. You would only be one of the boys if you asked her now. You've got to get bigger and more important. You've got to be the best."

"The best. That's right," he agreed. "I've got to be the best."

"You will take *me* to the dance," commanded Marjorie. (Or the play, or the debate, or whatever it was). "You will take me and leave Eureka for later."

That way, people got used to seeing Marjorie Pollock with Earl Crawford and began to link their names together. But they didn't do any of their whispering yet because there was nothing to whisper about. At least, I *think* there was nothing then.

All through high school, Marjorie pushed him with promises and prodded him with hope, and he was never alone with Eureka. But he ended up with two scholarships, athletic and student, to State College. Marjorie must have rubbed her hands briskly then, for Eureka had such miserable grades State wouldn't let her set foot on their campus, so she flounced off to an eastern finishing school.

"Now," said Marjorie, instructing Earl in his higher education,

"law is your very best bet. A lawyer is dignified and respected, and people who live the gracious life sometimes find it can get my-gracious if they don't know the law. So you learn to be a lawyer."

"All right," said Earl, and off they went to college together.

I can't give any first-hand information about them in college because I didn't go. I stayed home and got married. I married a man who dearly loves to talk. He proposed this way, "Cora, you're a darned good listener. What do you say we get married?"

Our three fine children talk half the time and listen the other half, which is a case, I guess, of Mother Nature balancing the scales.

Certainly during their vacations, Earl and Marjorie were together most of the time, and since Eureka spent hers in Europe or Mexico or one of those faraway places, Marjorie didn't have to whip Earl to greater efforts while she dangled his future just out of reach. Those summers must have been peaceful, and Marjorie must have devoutly wished Eureka would pick herself off a real earl, but she never did.

Then everything got settled into a routine. Earl established himself in one of the Ballantine Building offices, the school board elected Marjorie to the third grade, and Eureka came home to stay.

Eureka was really something! Her conversation was stuffed with *à moi!*, *caramba!* *how jolly!* Even a *kachcha* for diversion, to show how far she had traveled off the beaten path. It was about that time that she began to raise white Persian cats, not as pets but as accessories. Each cat was dyed a different color, and it was startling at first to see her walk down the street in a pink dress with a pink cat at the end of a pink leash. But we got used to it.

Of the three of them, I naturally saw the most of Marjorie during those years, what with PTA, school exhibits, and such. She had changed very little. She was still short, sturdy, brainy, and mother to all the kids. But Earl came first.

"I guess it was a good thing Eureka did all her running around before the money ran out," she told me while I folded my hands and listened. "She had several chances for titles on the way, too. You know, Cora, that woman never will get married." I raised my eyebrows with interest. "There is only one kind of man she would have, and that's one who thinks Eureka is as wonderful as she thinks Eureka is."

Well, that was a description tailor-made for Earl. Marjorie meant it that way, too. I think she knew then if she ever told Earl he was

ready, she would lose him. Not that Earl thought Eureka was wonderful, but what she represented was wonderful and would send him to his knees.

Of course Earl was successful. His law business grew with the town, and so did his real estate. As fast as a piece of the old Ballantine property was sold for taxes, he became the buyer. By then, with her mother and father gone, only her uncle left in one Victorian mansion and Eureka and her cats in the other, it was obvious to a good listener who could put the pieces together that Earl was gathering up all that tax-heavy gracious living to place at her feet the minute Marjorie told him he could go courting. She had plenty of opportunity to tell him not only that but a million other things as well because during those years, the gossip got started.

"Where there's smoke, there's fire," I heard from all sides.

"Why, her car's parked in front of the Ballantine Building at all hours of the night." It was, too. After Earl bought the Ballantine Building, he converted the top floor into his apartment, and when she wasn't teaching school, that's where Marjorie spent her time. But like I said, she was part sweetheart, part wife, and part mother—a full time job.

There was even talk about dismissing her from the school, but all the mothers with third-graders set their feet down, all the mothers who had had third-graders and those who would still have them set *their* feet down. That's what the mothers thought of Marjorie.

So she went on teaching school and visiting Earl, and I wonder what she would have done next if it hadn't been for the political rally, because Earl was again taking the long way around and easing his Cadillac slowly past the Victorian houses along the park. But came the political rally and the big dance and the auditorium was packed. I'll bet everybody was there except Eureka, and Eureka didn't go out much any more. She had a reason.

On the dance floor, my husband talks just as much as he does anywhere else, and I lead. So when I saw Earl and Marjorie, I led him that way and blocked out his voice. You learn how after you have been married as long as I.

"You'll have to run for assemblyman," Marjorie was saying. She moved with a token shuffle, like the hub of a wheel, while Earl danced around her with all the grace and polish she'd rubbed onto him. "You're an important man. The state needs you."

Earl set his chin into a stubborn square. He had been honed and worked into a firmer mold than the boy who invariably agreed. He

was strong now, and it showed. But he was still Marjorie's, and she wasn't giving up.

"The Ballantines have always been in politics," she said with a straight face. "There was Senator Ballantine and Congressman Ballantine and lots of others." Then she gave him that old-time scorn. "You wouldn't know because you never *knew* the Ballantines," and that did it. Marjorie had built him up and torn him down so many times, she must have begun to think of him as a do-it-yourself kit.

Just for the record, and because I have known the Ballantines for as many years as Marjorie, I've never heard of a senator or congressman in the family. Not even a dog catcher. But that's beside the point.

Earl got elected, left his law office to the hired help, and went to the state capitol, with Marjorie spending every summer out of town, and don't think that didn't provide a lot of interesting chit-chat through the dull, hot months because it did.

Of course, Eureka stayed home.

Abby, who did for me, did for Eureka. "You know, Miss Cora," she told me, "she lines up them martini glasses along her dressing table . . ."

"Eureka Ballantine?" I asked as if I didn't know.

"Miss Eureka. She rubs cream on her face and drinks one. Then she puts on powder and drinks another. Then she squints at the lines and puts on some more powder and drinks again. By the time she's finished up with them martinis, she's got everything pretty well covered up and painted on and puts a pink ribbon on a pink cat and sashays forth."

Eureka *did* look a little worn around the edges when she attended her uncle's funeral. But I took a quick glance at myself in my compact mirror and thought, "Don't we all?"

The first thing Marjorie said to me when I saw her that fall was, "Now that old Mr. Ballantine is gone, what happens to the house?"

I didn't know.

"They'll want to tear it down." Her forehead was creased with thought, and she tapped one finger against the palm of her other hand. "The land would make a nice recreation center for the kids. So close to the park and all."

I opened my mouth to say we already had one recreation center on the other side of the park so what did we need with a new one? But I closed it again because Marjorie was way ahead of me, and

I'd only slow her down.

"Earl will be home in a couple of months," she said, not irrelevantly, "home to stay." She was rounding out her thoughts now and smoothing them into a plan. "If they tear down one house, they might as well offer to buy Eureka's and tear them both down and get more land . . ."

And there it was, Marjorie's plan, all worked out for what it was worth. She stood up and brushed down her skirt over ample hips, all ready to toss out the idea, starting at the top where it could roll down the hill to the less important people, getting bigger and bigger, until everyone was thinking about a second recreation center without stopping to think that there was already a first one.

By the time Earl stepped off the plane, it was a big fat ball of rumor, ready to lay in his lap. I drove them home that day because Marjorie's car was in the garage, and I came back the long way, around the park, past Victorian row.

It was a sunshiny afternoon and pointed up all the peeling paint and rusting iron of the spiked fences, and as if he were at a tennis match, Earl's head turned toward the shabby houses and back again when Marjorie announced, "Old Mr. Ballantine died."

His head swivelled and returned.

"The city's planning to take over the house, buy Eureka's, tear them both down, and use the land for a recreation center."

Earl had filled out with the years, gained poise and strength of character and distinction, but in that moment, he might have been from the far side of the tracks again, with "My Ambition" in his hot, tight fingers.

He didn't say a word.

But he pulled strings at city hall, and worked over tax records in the assessor's office, and none of it was difficult really, for Marjorie had just made up a pretend ball and started it rolling so he'd buy Uncle Ballantine's house and stay away from Eureka.

It was a fine idea, for this was his most concrete advance. It got him actually inside one of those Victorian mansions, and kept him busy restoring it for years. There were floors to be laid and the roof repaired, the mahogany balustrade refinished. There was painting and papering to be done, and worn-out rugs to be copied. He had furniture upholstered and replaced . . . there were so many things to learn and so much to do to bring back that era of gracious living. And Earl was possessed.

"Well," wagged the tongues, "now her car's over by the park."

Tch, tch, such goings-on." Someone sniffed, "Nobody needs to tell *me* which room they're finishing first. I wasn't born yesterday." The laughter, a mixture of cynicism and curiosity, sounded like the laughter in the classroom so long ago.

Abby folded her arms over my dust cloth and planted her feet solidly on my Wilton. "Well, Miss Eureka isn't payin' any mind to what's happening at the other Ballantine house."

I, too, folded my arms, sat down on my sectional, and listened.

"All her cats have died and she isn't getting any new ones to dye." I waited through Abby's appreciation of her own awful pun. "She isn't seeing pink cats no more, but mark my words, one of these days she'll be seeing pink elephants."

Abby retreated into her own mind, allowing a moment's reverent silence for the old Ballantine way of life. Then she finished it all up. "She's got more bottles under her bed than dust, and she's got plenty of that."

Well!

Everybody had more or less forgotten Eureka. Everybody but Earl, I guess. And, of course, Marjorie.

The house was finished during a balmy spring just made for gracious living. Every last prism was in place and sparkling, every carved sofa polished and tapestried. My youngest was, at that time, rehearsing for a high school play, and it was my duty to pick her up after play practice over at the recreation building.

I was just rounding the park circle that night when the crystal chandeliers burst into light for the first time, blazing from every long slim window like an engraved announcement or, perhaps, the gold seal of a diploma.

I drove slowly, almost creeping, to take in the sight of that house in the moonlight, like a frosted wedding cake with the cupola on top for the bells. I could almost hear stringed music from the past, and the flutter of long-ago fans.

Gracious living, with its slow and regal pace. Well, now Earl had it.

But not yet. Not quite yet, he must have thought with his one-track mind. At least, I *think* that's what he thought from what happened later. I had just passed the house when the front door opened and I could see them standing there in the light of the hall: Marjorie stocky and sturdy, Earl all grown up and important. Then I made the curve of the road, and the trees hid them from view.

I leaned out and opened the car door for my daughter, telling

her to hurry for goodness sake, I didn't have all night. Then we went through the usual bit about would I drive Becky home to the east part of town and Jean to the west part of town? (Do those kids' mothers save their cars just to drive on Sundays?) Sure, I said, but don't take forever, impatiently waiting for them to scramble into the back seat, just feeling in my bones that things were happening over on Victorian row.

Now why did I feel like that? Was it the way those two seemed to stand poised in the lighted hallway, as if, now that Earl had all the rest of it, he was about to burst forth and gather up the tag end of his ambition, and Marjorie was holding him back with her years of efficient finagling?

I gunned the motor and leaped the car forward, hearing young and startled exclamations from the rear seat. I tore around the curve and along the straightaway, then eased up at the circle, and crept once more past the two Victorians, one dim in dark shadow, the other blazing with light, each with a front door open wide and not a soul around.

Those two open doors with their lack of life, the two houses, identical yet opposite, were far more foreboding wrapped in their silence than had they been screaming with the climax I expected.

I took the girls home, then backtracked a half hour later, to cruise the park circle once more and observe both doors closed, the dim house still dim and the bright house dim now, too. . . .

The next day being Abby's day at Eureka's, I expressed surprise to find her on my back porch. "Not to work, Miss Cora," she said quickly, "but to tell you all about it before you hear about it from someone else."

"About what?" I sat down at the kitchen table across from her and poured fresh coffee.

"Her," said Abby. "She's dead, just as dead as those dead soldiers she's got litterin' the house."

"Eureka Ballantine?" I asked, as if I didn't know.

"Miss Eureka. She was just layin' there, kind of draped on the sofa, a half bottle knocked over to where it had dribbled all over the rug and an empty by her side. . . ."

"What . . . ?" I began to ask, then clamped my mouth tight.

"Doc Muller says she fell. He says she hit her head on one of them carved arms of the sofa. But I know better. . . ."

I started, gulped a mouthful of scalding coffee and didn't feel a thing.

"Sure, she probably fell all right. She was always fallin'. All over the place. But that wasn't what killed her."

I stared at Abby, my throat tight.

"You know what killed her?" She leaned forward and pointed a finger at me. I sat very still, in frozen waiting. She straightened and took back her finger and said, "It was the drink. That's all it was. She died of drink, pure and simple. It filled her up, swelled all those blood vessels, and finally burst her heart."

I sighed with relief.

There are opinions and there are suppositions, but only I saw those two that night, Marjorie, stocky and sturdy, and Earl, all firm with resolve, as they stood together in the newly bright hallway of that Victorian house.

So only I can more accurately suppose what might have occurred later, and there are two suppositions.

One: Earl said, "Now I am ready," or something similar, with Marjorie not answering, having used up all her words. Then Earl marched down the path, unlatched the gate, walked stiffly next door, right up to Eureka's front porch and inside Eureka's house to discover that Eureka was not the height of his ambition after all, but the dregs of his beginning—a symbol only, and he had to destroy the symbol that had betrayed him, for he was born and bred to violence.

Two: Earl said, "Now I am ready," but with enough uncertainty in his voice to leave Marjorie with some convincing answers, such as, "You *can't* just go over there—barge in on her like that—she's a *Ballantine!*" her mind working expertly, putting the pieces together. "I shall go first and make the arrangements," and it was *she* who marched down the path, unlatched the gate, walked stiffly next door and inside, to find Eureka as she was, and stood there, remembering her years of work to prepare Earl for *this!*, then picked up the bottle to finish off her plans, for Marjorie was a fighter, she had been fighting for Earl most of her life.

So there are opinions and suppositions, but only I saw those two that night, and Eureka later, and only I know how it really was. And it really was murder.

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FICTION

Dark Places



by James McKimmey

Sheriff Orville Bundy stood beside a dusty courthouse window looking down over his town toward where it had happened. Ghost Bluff was built on the steep slant of a large Nevada cliff, with its crosstown streets forming natural descending tiers. The highway which ran through the community and beside which the courthouse was built created the top tier. And down there, to the north and east, was where the last paved avenue ended.

From his position, Bundy could not see a small portion of

the community that lay below and beyond. But he knew that, starting from the north end of the last lower street, there was a graveled path that curved down to yet another short tier where but one house stood alone beside a slow-running narrow river. It was where Janis Cramer had lived with her infirm mother.

Janis, twenty-two, had gotten off work at Ed Hill's pharmacy just past five in the afternoon two days ago. As usual, she'd walked down sidewalks to the final paved street. Then she'd used the graveled

path to continue on her way in the September sunshine.

Because of the way the path curved in its descent, a length of it was invisible to anyone not on it. Midway along that length was a cave. And in the cave's jet darkness they'd found Janis's body sprawled on the hard dirt floor.

She'd been struck on the head with something hard, probably with one of the rocks scattered about just inside the entrance, although none of them showed any evidence, such as a bloodstain, to establish the fact. The murderer had used so much force that her skull had been broken as though it had possessed no more resistance than a piece of delicate china. It was Bundy's conjecture that the killer had then left the cave with the rock in his hand and had thrown it away somewhere else.

That had been day before yesterday, Bundy thought. And by now he and his deputy, Harvey Plummer, had questioned everyone who could be of assistance, including Janis's mother, who'd phoned Bundy's office when her daughter hadn't gotten home as expected.

There was no longer any doubt about the identity of the others who had walked at that time of day down the curving, descending path that went past the cave's mouth. Two housewives,

a newspaper boy, a TV repairman, and a telephone lineman had offered combined information indicating that only two other people had taken Janis's route at a time that would have allowed them to kill her.

They were George Ferris and Skipping Sam.

Bundy had arrested both. They were now in cells of the jail. One had to be guilty.

But the problem was, Bundy thought wearily as he turned from the window and settled down into a wooden swivel chair behind his desk, which?

Bundy was short with great girth. He wore a tan Western-styled uniform and was rarely seen not wearing the wide-brimmed white hat on his head right now. He owned a perpetually florid face made round by fat. His pale blue eyes could charm or intimidate depending upon his mood. He had been sheriff of this town and county for twenty-one years. Respect for law here was healthy.

"Harvey!" he called suddenly. His voice had the sound of an outsized bullfrog's croak.

The door of Bundy's office opened almost immediately, and Deputy Harvey Plummer stepped in. He looked at the sheriff expectantly. Harvey was twenty-eight and six inches over six feet, appearing to be skinny in his uniform. But Bundy knew from experience that he was in

fact leanly muscled and strong. His face was narrow with heavy-lidded gray eyes. His ears were large and stuck out almost sideways from his temples. Although Harvey owned a zealous, self-righteous compulsion to correct others whenever he believed them to be in error, Bundy had decided some time ago that he was the best deputy he'd ever had or ever would have.

"Go get Sam, Harvey. I'm going to give him one more run-through."

"He's awful peeved over being stuck in the cell that way, Orville," Plummer said in a high, reedy voice. "He might not want to come."

"Tell him if he doesn't do it in a hurry, I'll drag him in here myself!"

"That might do it."

While Plummer was getting Skipping Sam, Bundy reflected unhappily on the loss of Janis Cramer as he stared at the scarred surface of his ancient desk where everything was always kept in perfect order under the bright illumination of a large, shiny, solid-brass swing-arm lamp with matching metal shade that the Chamber of Commerce had presented to him a year ago for meritorious community service.

Ed Hill's pharmacy, with its offering of medications, paperbacks, magazines, toiletries, watches, greeting cards, ciga-

rettes, cigars, candy, wine, beer, and innumerable other items, had become a comfortable meeting place for local citizens. Ed stood behind a counter on an upper level of the store and filled prescriptions. Janis, below, took care of all of the rest.

She'd been born, raised, and educated in Ghost Bluff; and if there had ever been anyone in town more generally loved, more popular than she, with Skipping Sam running a close second, there was no one still alive who could say who it might have been. She was sweetly pretty with a husky voice that could charm the most irascible of dispositions. Sheriff Bundy always looked forward to running out of his blood-pressure pills so that he could go in for a refill and talk with her while Ed counted them out.

Her soft azurine eyes would look at you merrily, sometimes mischievously, as she chatted away, showing her infectious smile. And there was never a hint of malice or cunning or dishonesty because she was simply incapable of any of them. She had somehow remained so innocently naive, devoted to old fashioned values taught her by her mother, that that in itself had protected her from exploitation. Town talk had told Bundy that the young men who took her out had developed a code of conduct among them-

selves until she decided which she would marry. Should one of them overstep the bounds, and should she allow it to be known, he would have to answer to the rest.

And it was also that same innocent naiveté that had finally invited that which had happened to her. Someone had finally, and drastically, overstepped, Bundy was certain.

The coroner's report had indicated that she had not been sexually molested. But there was no doubt in Bundy's mind that someone had misinterpreted as a personal invitation the warmth she gave to everyone. He had then, one way or another, lured her into the cave. When she'd finally resisted him, he'd reacted violently by picking up a heavy rock and killing her. It had been done so swiftly that she hadn't even had time to leave a scratch on him.

The killer was either the stranger, George Ferris, new in town, or it was the person everyone in Ghost Bluff had loved almost as much as they had Janis, Skipping Sam.

The door opened again as Deputy Plummer said, "Here he is, Orville." Bundy pointed to a wooden straight chair, and Sam, looking miffed, put himself on it. Deputy Plummer sat down beside him, placing a palm meaningfully on the butt of the

revolver jutting up from the tooled leather holster strapped at his waist.

Wearing a faded red-checked shirt, bleached jeans, and ankle-high boots, Sam was white-haired with a deeply browned face lined by time and weather. Of medium height, he was wiry and trim and moved with a springy quickness owned by some men half his age. How old he actually was no one knew, including Sam. He'd come into town on a bus twenty years ago, not remembering where he'd come from or why he'd arrived at Ghost Bluff. His wallet had contained no ID. But it had held enough money to allow him to move into an attic room in Mrs. Gibbons' boarding house.

After that, he'd demonstrated that what he liked doing most was walking, which he did with speed, energy, and one-minded purpose, although often he had no purpose. When he was in full stride, his face reflecting pride and satisfaction, he sometimes skipped.

It quickly became apparent to everyone that somewhere in his history something had happened that had simplified his thinking mechanism to bare basics. And he was given sympathetic help by those who knew how to put on charity efforts to raise money for his use. In time, he became a fleet-footed delivery man for businesses in town,

earning just enough to keep his place at Mrs. Gibbons'. In time, it seemed obvious that Skipping Sam was totally harmless.

But now Janis Cramer was dead. And Skipping Sam had been observed by several to have been able to have been where she was murdered at the time she was. The other suspect, George Ferris, insisted he'd seen Skipping Sam come out of that cave at that same time.

Now Skipping Sam looked at Sheriff Orville Bundy. In his silver eyes was the resentful expression of any child who feels he has been unjustly accused and unfairly used.

"Sam," Sheriff Bundy said gently, "I've got you here for your own good. I want you to understand that."

Sam's expressive face shifted to a look of accusation. "It ain't for my own good, keeping me from the outside!"

"Yes, it is," Bundy said, meaning it. Everyone in town knew that Sam had been arrested as one of the suspects. Some had already convinced themselves that it was Sam, not the stranger, Ferris, who had killed Janis. Bundy had overheard some of that opinion expressed at the Blood Bucket Bar and Casino the night before. But it was only human nature, he'd decided, considering that Sam wasn't playing

with fifty-two cards.

"Ain't," Sam said, putting one ankle over another and staring at his walk-worn boots.

"You walked down past the cave two days ago, didn't you, Sam? A bit after five in the afternoon?"

"I ain't sure about any such thing like that."

Sam had already admitted to that much several times since Janis had been killed. But now he was beginning to forget, which Bundy had been expecting. And so what else had he forgotten? Picking up a rock, smashing Janis's head, running out frightened, throwing the rock away where it hadn't yet been found, then lying about what had happened until lying wasn't necessary because he couldn't remember any more?

Feeling frustration, Bundy said, "Do you remember where Janis Cramer lived, Sam?"

Sam became more alert and smiled for the first time, his face lighting up, eyes sparkling. "She's a nice girl! I go into the drugstore every day to see her! I'll go in tomorrow, too! And she'll say, 'Well, look who came skipping in! My goodness, if it isn't Sam!'"

He'd now forgotten that she was dead, but he could still remember that greeting because he'd been hearing it for so long. But how had he really been interpreting that daily welcome?

"Janis's house is down there on the river, Sam," Bundy said.

"Next to it," Deputy Harvey Plummer corrected. "Not on it."

"You know what I mean!"

"It's not right to say a house is *on* a river when it's *next* to it!"

"Harvey?" Bundy said threateningly, holding up his right thumb and jabbing it at him. Plummer closed his mouth and remained quiet with effort, looking almost as resentful as Skipping Sam had a few moments ago.

Bundy looked back at Skipping Sam and was suddenly aware that Sam now owned the stale, musty odor of the jail. Fastidiously clean, he'd always, until now, given off the fresh smell of the outdoors. That brief sparkle of his eyes had dimmed away, too. It was depressing.

"Do you know where the river is, Sam?" Bundy asked quietly.

"Why wouldn't I know where the river is!"

"And is that why you went down the gravel path past the cave day before yesterday? Just to walk beside the river?" Witnesses above had seen him going down the path. But Janis's mother, who each late weekday afternoon always sat beside a window watching for her daughter's return, had not seen Sam arrive down there—or anyone else, including the other suspect, George Ferris, who had

freely stated that he'd turned around before going that far because he was out of shape and tired of walking. "Sam?"

"Maybe." But there was a lack of certainty.

"Then why didn't you go all the way down there? What held you up from doing that?"

Sam only looked confused. And Bundy knew that he might have changed his intentions for no good reason at all.

"Deputy Bundy?" Sam said, his eyes brightening again as he leaned forward eagerly toward the sheriff.

"*Sheriff* Bundy!" Harvey Plummer said righteously.

"*Sheriff* Bundy?" Sam said, correcting himself. "All I want is to be set free so I can go back outside and deliver what I got to deliver and then go home when I'm wore out and have some good supper with Mrs. Gibbons and go to my room and sleep tight and then get up and do that again the next day. I wouldn't cause anybody any trouble ever!"

Bundy looked deep into Sam's anxious eyes and made up his mind. Sam hadn't killed that girl, he told himself. It wasn't possible.

"Deputy?" Sam pleaded to Bundy.

"*Sheriff*," Plummer corrected.

Bundy said, "If there's any way in this world I can let you

out to do that, Sam, I by God will!"

Plummer took Skipping Sam back to his cell and returned with George Ferris, who sat down where Sam had been, with Plummer himself beside him, palm again resting on his revolver.

Ferris smiled insincerely at Sheriff Bundy. He was a compactly built man of six feet in his forty-second year with a pale, angular face; his nose was small with oddly flared nostrils, and his dark eyes had the guarded look of someone unceasingly suspicious of everything.

His black hair was cut in a fashion reminiscent of the fifties, and Bundy guessed that he dyed it. He wore a shiny blue Western-styled acrylic shirt with imitation pearl buttons on the pocket flaps, at the cuffs, and running down the front. His bluejeans owned a permanent press. His Western boots were burnished gold with man-made shafts and composition soles and heels. Bundy had a keen eye when it came to cowboy boots. Ferris had purchased his counterfeit outfit in Los Angeles whence he'd come a month ago, Bundy had decided.

Because Ferris had also moved into Mrs. Gibbons' boarding house, Deputy Harvey Plummer had gone there and

collected both his and Skipping Sam's extra clothing and toiletries to bring to the jail.

Remaining silent, letting Ferris hold on to his false smile, Sheriff Bundy slid open the middle drawer of his desk slightly and looked at a key there.

It was a short flat brass key made to fit a Yale lock, the kind of lock that was on Mrs. Gibbons' front door. When Skipping Sam had been searched, after being arrested, they'd found an identical key in his right front trouser pocket, the place where most men carry keys. A search of Ferris had not produced such a key.

Plummer had found the one in Bundy's drawer on the gravel path about twenty-five feet from the entrance to the cave. Although he'd picked it up carefully to preserve fingerprints, it had been smudged in such a way that there were none. Nevertheless, it was obvious that it was Ferris's. He'd somehow accidentally dropped it, probably in the process of pulling out his cigarette lighter. Bundy and Plummer had judged. He carried the lighter in his right front trouser pocket, and there had been a butt of his brand of cigarette on the path near the key.

But the key was doing them no good, Bundy thought angrily. It had been found outside

the cave, not inside, and Ferris had freely admitted to being outside the cave.

Bundy had run a check immediately on the man. Everything he'd told them about himself appeared to be true. A bachelor with no criminal record, he'd owned and run a video game arcade in Hollywood. His explanation about why he'd sold it and come here was simply that he'd grown tired of city living, had always loved Western movies, and had chosen a Nevada town with a name that might have fitted into one of those movies. He'd fallen in love with Ghost Bluff and intended to start up a new arcade here after he'd rested a bit.

It was Bundy's instinctive feeling, however, that he'd run away from something. But whatever it was, it wasn't, as yet anyway, on police records.

"The old man won't admit killing that poor girl?" Ferris finally asked.

Bundy hadn't liked him on sight. Now he hated him. The man had killed Janis, Bundy was now certain, which left an invalided lady alone in a house by the river. He was attempting to place all that blame on the guileless Skipping Sam, who was incapable of defending himself. But Bundy knew that he was going to have to do better than simply hating if Sam

were ever going to get out to skip freely again in the outdoors he loved so much.

"Tell me again, Ferris," Bundy said shortly.

Ferris shrugged and went through it again:

He'd spent most of the day in his room looking at his small TV set. He'd finally decided to get some exercise before dinner. Walking to the river seemed like a good idea.

And so he'd gone down that graveled path. When he'd reached the mouth of the cave, he'd heard a sound in there like something struck with a hammer and cracking as a result. Then he'd seen Skipping Sam come dancing out, eyes looking wild. There was a sizable rock in Sam's right hand. Sam had disappeared up the path with it, heading back into town.

"Sam says he never saw you."

"He wasn't seeing anything except his way out of that cave."

"Did you wonder what he might have hit with that rock?"

"It went through my mind he could have used it on the head of somebody's dog. You can't trust a crazy like that."

"But you didn't go into the cave to investigate."

"A sight like that would have been enough to make me faint! But if I'd known it was that lovely, lovely girl—"

"Lovely, lovely," Bundy said. "Were you attracted to her?"

"Who wouldn't have been, sheriff?"

"I'm told you've been going into the pharmacy a lot lately, just to buy cigarettes. You can buy cigarettes in a lot of places in this town."

Ferris nodded agreeably. "I could have bought cigarettes at the grocery from Ozzie Bates, that mean, ugly soul. Or—from the girl in the pharmacy, same price, like I did. Why do I have to account for that?"

Bundy rubbed a hand along his round chin, irritated by Ferris's facile but unassailable answers, thinking how right things had been for Skipping Sam only a week ago. Mrs. Gibbons had used some of her savings to give Sam the finest treat he'd ever had.

She and Sam had taken an early bus to Reno, then flown south to go to Disneyland. They'd spent most of the day there, with Sam taking one ride and then another, not afraid no matter what kind of ride it was, happier than any seven-year-old could be. They'd flown back that night. And Sam had absolutely glowed with the pleasure of it until he began forgetting where he'd been. . . .

Sheriff Bundy at last realized what he was going to do. He said abruptly:

"I'm tired of your lying, Ferris!"

The sudden change of ap-

proach made Deputy Harvey Plummer sit more erectly. Ferris's eyes narrowed.

"When Harvey and I questioned Mrs. Gibbons," Bundy said, "she told us something nobody else around here ever knew about Skipping Sam before. When she took him down to Disneyland, he wouldn't get on a single ride if it took him into the dark. She found out a long time ago that he won't sleep in his room in the attic without a light."

"Orville?" Plummer said.

"There's no way Sam would have gone into the cave where we found the girl. It's pitch black there. And Sam's deathly afraid of dark places!"

"Orville," Plummer said more loudly.

Bundy took the key out of the drawer and slapped it down on his desk with a crack, saying, "We searched that cave again today. We found what we should have found the first time. This key!"

"Orville!" Plummer said, half-rising.

But then, noticing Bundy's right hand, he snapped his mouth shut and sat down as Bundy said to a tensing Ferris:

"Sam was carrying his key when we arrested him. But you weren't. You knew you'd lost it, didn't you? But you didn't know where. All you could hope for was that it wasn't in that cave.

But that's where we found it. And it had one of your fingerprints on it!"

Plummer's mouth opened, but he forced it closed again.

Ferris's face had now turned even more pale. He gripped and ungripped his hands over his knees, the knuckles white. Then his eyes assumed a distant, almost trance-like look, as he said: "I was waiting for her by the cave when she came down the path. She smiled at me like she'd been doing all along. I knew what she had in mind. So I told her I'd always been nervous about what might be in the cave. And she said there was no reason to be. All the kids, when they weren't in school, played in it. Then she stepped inside and said, see? It's safe, she said."

His mouth curled at a corner. "But when I went in after her, she started struggling. I saw a rock and picked it up fast because she'd tricked me—like the others! I pulled her into the dark . . ."

Ferris's eyes suddenly refocused. He bent forward and yanked up the brass lamp by its swing arm. He swung the heavy base with a mighty, vicious sweep at Bundy, who managed to slam himself backward just in time, falling out of his chair as the metal shade flew off the lamp and into a wall with a reverberating clang. The bulb

popped and shattered, shards of glass flying everywhere.

Ferris started to crawl over the desk after Bundy, lifting the lamp again. But Plummer dived on his back and wrapped long arms around him. Bundy scrambled to his feet and swung a fist in the direction of Ferris's jaw, finding it. Ferris was stunned just long enough to get handcuffs on him. Then they wrestled him down the hall and into his cell.

Late golden sunlight poured softly over the town so that there were long shadows. Sheriff Bundy, from his window, could see Sam hurrying along a sidewalk with high energy. Bundy smiled and turned around, saying to Deputy Plummer, "It's good to see Sam out there walking again, Harvey."

Plummer nodded. "It worked out all around, didn't it, Orville? But I'll always be sorry about Janis, of course."

"Yes," said Bundy. "So will I."

"And her mother."

"She'll get a lot of help from this town."

"It's the way it is, here. And at least Ferris isn't going to murder any more girls than the three he finally admitted to killing. Thanks to you."

"I only did what I could think to do."

"And I almost ruined it, didn't I?" Plummer said guiltily. "When you said Mrs. Gibbons told us Sam wouldn't get on a ride at Disneyland if it took him into the dark, and wouldn't sleep in his room without light, all because he was afraid of dark places, I just about blurted out that she'd never told us anything like that and that Sam wasn't afraid of a single thing in this world!"

"Well—"

"Then you said we'd found the key in the cave when I'd found it on the path. You said Ferris's fingerprint was on it when it wasn't. And I just about shouted out that none of that was true, either. I would have if I hadn't seen your thumb jabbing away at me!"

"It's not my style, lying away like that. I don't like doing it. But—"

"He never would have confessed if you hadn't! You did the right thing. And I near put the kibosh on it. Boy! I think *I'm* so right. And all along I'm wrong. I apologize, Orville."

"Don't apologize, Harvey."

"That's a bad habit, my correcting everybody the minute it seems like they're making a mistake. I'm going to quit it! Forever."

"That's fine. Now what do

you say we close shop?" He walked to the door. "Cross the street and have a beer at the Blood Bucket."

"Street?" Plummer said as he followed the sheriff down the hallway. "That's the highway, Orville!"

Bundy went out the front door of the courthouse and down three concrete steps to the sidewalk.

He could again see Skipping Sam as the wiry old man headed toward a setting sun with bounding strides.

"Now this here we're crossing, Orville," Plummer said indignantly, "isn't any street. This here's Highway 3!"

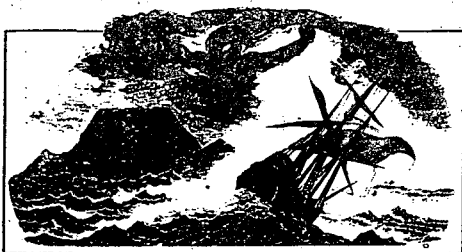
Bundy saw Sam suddenly take a long, joyful skip.

"I'm telling you, Orville, you can't call this just a street! This here is U.S. Highway 3! And it has been ever since I was born!"

But Bundy simply continued on his way toward that beer, grinning, not responding. If he'd ever really wanted anything in his life, it was to see Sam skip again. And he just had. He wasn't even going to do so much as jab a thumb in his deputy's direction, he told himself, no matter if Harvey kept it up all night. This was one time when he felt too good to mind.

CASES ON FILE

Full Fathom Five
by Alexander Woolcott



This is the story just as I heard it the other evening—a ghost story told me as true. It seems that one chilly October night in the first decade of the present century, two sisters were motoring along a Cape Cod road, when their car broke down just before midnight and would go no farther. This was in an era when such mishaps were both commoner and more hopeless than they are today. For these two, there was no chance of help until another car might chance to come by in the morning and give them a tow. Of a lodging for the night there was no hope, except a gaunt, unlighted, frame house which, with a clump of pine

trees beside it, stood black in the moonlight, across a neglected stretch of frost-hardened lawn.

They yanked at its ancient bell-pull, but only a faint tinkle within made answer. They banged despairingly on the door panel, only to awaken what at first they thought was an echo, and then identified as a shutter responding antiphonally with the help of a nipping wind. This shutter was around the corner, and the ground floor window behind it was broken and unfastened. There was enough moonlight to show that the room within was a deserted library, with a few books left on the sagging shelves and a few pieces

From WHILE ROME BURNS by Alexander Woolcott. Copyright 1934 by Alexander Woolcott. Copyright renewed 1962 by Joseph P. Hennessey. Reprinted by arrangement with The Viking Press.

of dilapidated furniture still standing where some departing family had left them, long before. At least the sweep of the electric flash which one of the women had brought with her showed them that on the uncarpeted floor the dust lay thick and trackless, as if no one had trod there in many a day.

They decided to bring their blankets in from the car and stretch out there on the floor until daylight, none too comfortable, perhaps, but at least sheltered from that salt and cutting wind. It was while they were lying there, trying to get to sleep, while, indeed, they had drifted halfway across the borderland, that they saw—each confirming the other's fear by a convulsive grip of the hand—saw standing at the empty fireplace, as if trying to dry himself by a fire that was not there, the wraithlike figure of a sailor, come dripping from the sea.

After an endless moment, in which neither woman breathed, one of them somehow found the strength to call out, "Who's there?" The challenge shattered the intolerable silence, and at the sound, muttering a little—they said afterwards that it was something between a groan and a whimper—the misty figure seemed to dissolve. They strained their eyes, but

could see nothing between themselves and the battered mantelpiece.

Then, telling themselves (and, as one does, half believing it) that they had been dreaming, they tried again to sleep, and, indeed, did sleep until a patch of shuttered sunlight striped the morning floor. As they sat up and blinked at the gritty realism of the forsaken room, they would, I think, have laughed at their shared illusion of the night before, had it not been for something at which one of the sisters pointed with a kind of gasp. There, in the still undisturbed dust, on the spot in front of the fireplace where the apparition had seemed to stand, was a patch of water, a little, circular pool that had issued from no crack in the floor nor, as far as they could see, fallen from any point in the innocent ceiling. Near it in the surrounding dust was no footprint—their own or any other's—and in it was a piece of green that looked like seaweed. One of the women bent down and put her finger to the water, then lifted it to her tongue. The water was salty.

After that the sisters scuttled out and sat in their car, until a passerby gave them a tow to the nearest village. In its tavern at breakfast they gossiped with the proprietress about the

empty house among the pine trees down the road. Oh, yes, it had been just that way for a score of years or more. Folks did say the place was spooky, haunted by a son of the family who, driven out by his father, had shipped before the mast and been drowned at sea. Some said the family had moved away because they could not stand the things they heard and saw at night.

A year later, one of the sisters told the story at a dinner party in New York. In the pause that followed a man across the table leaned forward.

"My dear lady," he said, with a smile, "I happen to be the curator of a museum where they are doing a good deal of work on submarine vegetation. In your place, I never would have left that house without taking the bit of seaweed with me."

"Of course you wouldn't," she answered tartly, "and neither did I."

It seems she had lifted it out of the water and dried it a little by pressing it against a window pane. Then she had carried it off in her pocketbook, as a souvenir. As far as she knew, it was still in an envelope in a little drawer of her desk at home. If she could find it, would he like to see it? He would. Next morning she sent it around by messenger, and a few days later

it came back with a note.

"You were right," the note said, "this is seaweed. Furthermore, it may interest you to learn that it is of a rare variety which, as far as we know, grows only on dead bodies."

And that, my dears, is the story as I heard it the other evening, heard it from Alice Duer Miller who, in turn, had heard it five-and-twenty years before from Mrs. George Haven Putnam, sometime dean of Barnard College and author of that admirable work, *The Lady*. To her I must go if—as I certainly did—I wanted more precise details. So to Mrs. Putnam I went, hat in hand and, as an inveterate reporter, showered her with questions. I wanted the names of the seaweed, of the curator, of the museum, of the two sisters, of the dead sailor, and of the nearby village on Cape Cod. I wanted a roadmap marked with a cross to show the house in the grove of pines. I wanted—but the examination came to a dead stop at the sight of her obvious embarrassment. She was most graciously apologetic, but, really, what with this and what with that, she had forgotten the whole story. She could not even remember—and thus it is ever with my life in science—who it was that had told it to her.

FOOTNOTE: More recently, the

curator of the Botanical Museum in St. Louis has assured me that this tale, whispered from neighbor to neighbor across the country, has become distorted in a manner offensive to students of submarine vegetation. According to him, the visitor from the sea was seen in a house in Woods Hole, Mass. He was a son of the house who had been drowned during his hon-

eymoon off the coast of Australia. The seaweed picked up off the dusty floor of that New England mansion was of a variety which grows only off the Australian coast. The curator even presented me with the actual seaweed. I regard it with mingled affection and skepticism, and keep it pressed between the pages of Bulfinch's *Mythology*.

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BOOKED & PRINTED

by Mary Cannon



LUCILLE KALLEN

“Comparisons are odious,” declared one of Shakespeare’s clowns. Generally that’s true, but I believe there are exceptions. On the strength of this view—knowing full well that I’m daring the wrath of the fans of both Lucille Kallen and the author to whom I intend to compare her—I bravely state that admirers of Rex Stout’s Nero Wolfe series should find pleasure in Ms. Kallen’s C.B. Greenfield mysteries.

Alas, there are only three, but as Kallen introduced the first (appropriately titled *Introducing C.B. Greenfield*) in 1979, and has already written two

more (*C.B. Greenfield: The Tanglewood Murder* in 1980, and *C.B. Greenfield: No Lady in the House* in 1982), chances seem very good that we are in at the beginning of something.

Why do I compare these to the Nero Wolfe books? Actually, to give you an idea of their flavor, although I have several specific reasons. First, C.B. Greenfield reminds me of Nero Wolfe. C.B. is a widower (with two grown daughters) who has become a confirmed bachelor. He’s the owner and editor of the *Reporter*, a weekly newspaper serving the small Westchester, New York, community of Sloan’s Ford. This allows him

to be as reclusive and cantankerously independent as he chooses. Orchids play no part in C.B.'s life, but music does: he's a passionate music-lover and plays cello in an amateur chamber group. His home, which houses a priceless stereo and record collection, is an apartment above his office; both are located in an old, white, mansard-roofed house. Thus, like Wolfe, Greenfield can go to work by merely going downstairs.

Here's what Greenfield's Boswell has to say about him: "He made a good gadfly; he was irritating, relentless, stubborn, and waspish . . . in the guise of an immensely calm and soft-spoken man." C.B. wears horn-rimmed glasses, is long and slope-shouldered (unlike Nero), with wispy-gray hair, a mournful mien, and "the face of a dignified basset hound." He is the master (like Wolfe) of the barbed comment and the ultimate put-down, in ten words or less.

Another similarity is Greenfield's right arm—or "his legs," as she disparagingly and despairingly terms her role in his life. She's Maggie Rome, ace reporter for the *Reporter*, narrator of the three novels, and definitely Archie to Greenfield's Nero. Maggie's in her middle forties, happily married to an engineer whose work often takes him away from home.

She's also the mother of two college-age boys, a pianist in Greenfield's chamber music trio, and a very bright and funny lady. For example, her unspoken comment on the declaration made by an editor of best-selling bedroom novels:

"Sex is self-realization (says the editor). And self-realization is the answer to everything."

"Good. She'd solved the Middle East problem. That was a load off my mind."

Begin at the beginning, when the newspaper editor drags his unwilling sidekick into a private investigation. The *Reporter's* last surviving delivery boy has become the victim of a hit-and-run driver. The suspects—especially the Yankee Hollis family—are as richly drawn as the suspects, Maggie and Charlie. Move on to the second book, set in "Tanglewood, the scenic summertime mecca of the music lover," and follow Greenfield's search—with Maggie's rather reluctant assistance—for the mysterious perpetrator of pranks aimed at members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, guest artists at Tanglewood that summer. All too quickly the mischief escalates from dangerous to deadly, and as Charlie and Maggie have a violinist friend in the orchestra, Charlie has little difficulty in persuading

Maggie to stay on and help out. The discussions and descriptions of the music and the atmosphere at the festival surpass any travel literature you'll ever read about Tanglewood.

Finally, there's the newest book, subtitled *No Lady in the House*. The murder of a young cleaning woman—in Greenfield's upstairs apartment, no less—sends Maggie off on an investigation into the homes and lives of four suburban women. On the surface, their dead employee appears to be their only common bond, until, under Greenfield's bossy eye, Maggie digs deeper.

These are very contemporary, very American, and very

entertaining. Kallen serves up a satisfying number of suspects and red herrings, and seasons them with suspense. The verbal sparring between Charlie and Maggie provides an inexhaustible source of further amusement; their rapport makes them an exceptionally ingratiating team of amateur investigators. Here's hoping that Ms. Kallen, who won an American Book Award for the first in the C.B. Greenfield series, and who also writes for TV and the theater, will manage to give us a new mystery a year.

(All three novels are available in Ballantine Books paperbacks at \$2.50 each.)

MYSTERY REVIEWS

Your favorite police inspectors may hail from Britain or our own native soil, but I think you'll also enjoy two detectives who do their work on the continent. Author Mark Hebden showcases the meticulous and morose Inspector Evariste Clovis Désiré Pel, a most capital policeman from Burgundy's capital. Pel is a misanthrope, a die-hard bachelor, a self-styled martyr. He chain smokes Gauloises—vowing to quit smoking with each one he lights—and pops tablet after tablet for his chronic dyspepsia, grumpy habits that only partially disguise a good heart and compassionate nature. In **Death Set to Music**, Pel doggedly seeks the person who battered to death a very unloved woman in her own living room. The suspects are those closest to the victim. Each has motive, so Pel must match one of them to means and opportunity. For added interest, there's background on the daily life and work methods of a contemporary policeman in small-town France. (Walker and Company, \$12.95, 188 pp.)

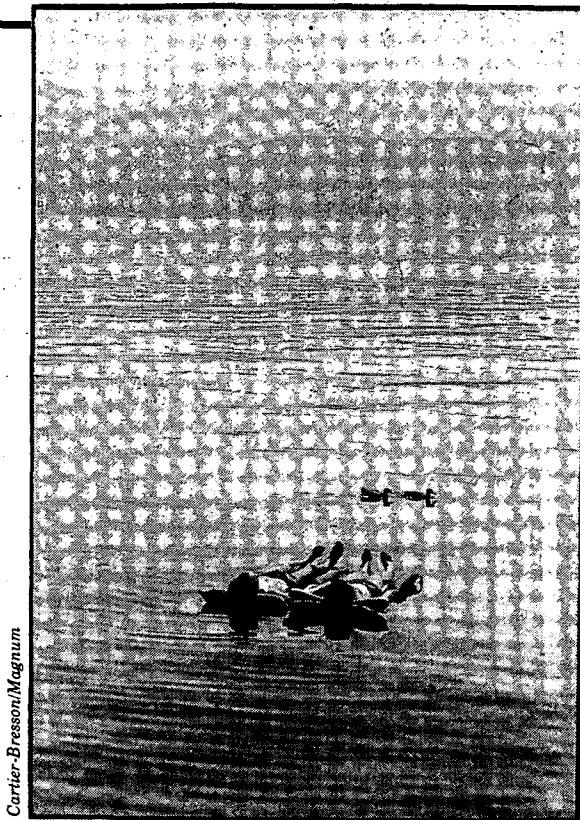
Even more fascinating is **Christmas Rising** by David Serafin.

The setting is Spain today; the hero is Superintendent Luis Bernal, who is nearing retirement as head of a crack Madrid police team. The investigation orders come directly from the royal palace, where the king asks Bernal to check out discreetly a series of newspaper "personals" that appear to implicate the royal residences. A charred body turns up in the snow, soon followed by a drowned friar, and Bernal's team is forced to break a code, reconstruct a body from x-rays, bring invisible writing to light, and even mount a daring commando raid to rescue a kidnap victim. Serafin's police employ a number of intriguing new techniques in this procedural. The most novel elements, however, result from the picture of Spain today. (St. Martin's Press, \$10.95, 224 pp.)

Mel Arrighi's **Alter Ego** is subtitled "A Hank & Biff Mystery." The "Hank" refers to forty-year-old Hank Mercer, author of a number of successful mysteries that feature a burly slob named—have you guessed?—Biff. This is a clever comic premise: Hank, fed up with his muscle-bound character, is lunching at Le Perigord with his editor. Hank's hoping to convince the man that the public will love his newest creation, a suave and cerebral detective notable for his impeccable grooming. The editor is unconvinced until a beautiful young woman from a nearby table drops a matchbook in Hank's lap as she leaves the restaurant. Inside is a scrawled plea for help. So Hank makes a bet with his editor that a man who abhors violence (Hank) can still find glamor and adventure—and use only brain muscle to track down crime. The bet is on and Hank is off to rescue the damsel. I won't tell you more beyond hinting that Hank finds himself relying on good old Biff in ways he'd never dreamed of doing. This is smooth and funny; supporting characters are something special, too. (St. Martin's Press, \$11.95, 170 pp.)

The newest of William Marshall's books in the "Yellowthread Street Mystery" series is **Perfect End** (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, \$13.50, 198 pp.): If you've not read any of these, you have some surprises in store for you, such as the location of the Yellowthread Street Precinct House—Hong Kong—and the idiosyncratic Senior Inspector Christopher O'Yee. (He's half-Irish, half-Chinese.) There's plenty more to savor in *Perfect End* as a typhoon named Pandora complicates the investigation of a bizarre mass murder: a nearby precinct house shelters only dead policeman, killed in a startling manner, their bodies lined up like sentries along one wall. The storm, and the dangerous hunt for a deadly killer, build together to a fierce climax.

THE MYSTERIOUS PHOTOGRAPH



Cartier-Bresson/Magnum

Obviously, a secret rendezvous. We will give a prize of \$25 to the person who invents the best mystery story (in 250 words or less), based on the above photograph. The story will be printed in a future issue. Reply to Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, 380 Lexington Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10017.

The winning entry for the February Mysterious Photograph will be found on page 155.

A Lesson From the Master

by
Louis Weinstein



Pat O'Hara just happened to be at my Manhattan apartment, helping me destroy a few beers on a dull fall afternoon, when Chips Bonney phoned about his missing granddaughter. I'd heard of Bonney, boss of Brooklyn's Harrington piers for so long hardly anyone except Pat remembered who was boss before him.

Bonney wanted me to find the eight-year-old, who'd vanished on her way to school that morning. The police had just left, after questioning him and his daughter. But the police, Bonney was sorry to say, were generally a day late and a body long on kidnappings. Some

topflight outside help would make him feel better about his chances of getting the kid back alive and unharmed. He'd heard Phil Mandel was pretty good; that was the word on the waterfront.

I told Bonney I'd be right over, without disillusioning him. I've gotten the credit for solving a few waterfront cases but the truth is that the brain behind my brilliant work belongs to Pat O'Hara, who is a seventy-five-year-old retired City of New York dockmaster. He's sharp as they come and knows all the ins and outs of the waterfront, going back to the days when the Indians canoed across Canal Street from river to river.



Pat, a widower, lives alone on his houseboat at Lacey's Marina, which isn't far from the address Bonney gave me. Pat is always interested in my waterfront cases, and has never refused to give me a hand if I ask, which I am generally smart enough to do. So when I asked this time, Pat said he wouldn't mind at all if, before dropping him off at home, I stopped to see Bonney. He stuffed his long, lean frame into my old Ford for the ride across the Brooklyn Bridge and down the parkway to Bonney's house.

Bonney lived in a good but not snooty residential section a few blocks off Gravesend Bay. As I drove, Pat briefed me.

Chips was somewhere in his middle sixties. A barrel of a man. Real name Pete. The Chips moniker came not so much from his poker playing as from his habit of telling management in showdown negotiations to throw some chips in the pot if they wanted to see what cards he held. An unusual man in many ways. Underneath the rough-neck veneer, a cultured man. Very charitable, too. Generous with the poor, the church, the arts, youth organizations. He had started on Manhattan's Chelsea piers as a two-fisted public loader, a situation calling for more muscle than diplomacy, and moved on to Brooklyn, where his free-

swinging style fit right in. He had mellowed over the years from a loud-voiced table pounder to a soft-spoken conciliator; someone management could deal with comfortably. But now, Pat said, the new boys on the block were crowding him, challenging his leadership, coming right out and saying he'd sold out, lost his guts, was burned out, too sick with high blood pressure to do right by the job. An election was coming up in two days and the in-fighting was getting nasty. Opinion was that for once Chips was not a shoo-in. Frank Ponton stood a good chance of beating him.

Chips's wife, Pat added, had died a good fifteen years ago. He'd never remarried. His only child, a daughter, had come back home when her marriage went sour.

Pat didn't have time for more. We were parked in front of Bonney's big, white-shingled, wooden-porched, two story house. As we started up the walk, the front door opened abruptly, and a young man came flying out across the porch. The door slammed shut, and the young man, long dirty-blond hair streaming behind him, arms waving, yelled at it.

"You can't get rid of me this way. I'll be back. I'm tired of getting pushed around. I've got my rights."

We detoured around him, and

he glowered at us, still muttering vague threats.

We went up the one step to the porch. I pushed the bell. A dog sounded off inside, the barking and growling punctuated by a woman's angry voice. A deep voice yelled to get the damned dog locked up, then the door opened. A big man filled the doorway. Bigger than I had expected. Massive chest. Wearing a sleeveless navy blue pullover sweater over a short-sleeved shirt. Well-muscled, but the muscles going slack with age.

The woman standing at his shoulder was in a terrible state. She was sloppily dressed—baggy green slacks and a wrinkled, stained white top. She was wringing her hands, held together across her midriff. Her nose was red and her eyes had the strained, haunted look of fear in them.

"You must be Phil Mandel." Chips sort of shook his head. "Glad you're here. I thought it might be Mousie—Andy—coming back. I told him to go on home, cool off, and come back later."

Mousie. The name seemed to fit the young guy we'd seen getting the heave-ho. The way he looked, the nervous, darting way he moved.

Chips was saying, "Come on in, where we can talk. Hello, Pat." His eyebrows had shot up,

and he looked uncertainly from Pat to me. "What a surprise."

"It's been a while," Pat smiled faintly. "Sorry about your troubles, Chips. Phil was just giving me a ride home."

"It's all right, Mr. Bonney," I said. "I don't have any secrets from Pat. He's an old friend of mine, won't be in the way."

"Why should I mind?" Bonney came back quickly. "All I care about is getting that kid, Laurie, home safe and sound, and then putting that Frank Ponton where he belongs, any way you can. If I had that punk here right now, I'd break him in half. Never, never did I think even he would stoop to this."

All the while he was talking he was moving, through a big, middle-class dining room, none too tidy, and a pretty messy kitchen, dirty dishes everywhere. We ended up in a good-sized room, a combination den and office. A big rolltop walnut desk stood along one of the dark, paneled walls. Atop the upper shelf of the desk was a gooseneck fluorescent lamp. Piled on both sides of the lamp were file folders, brochures, fancily-bound reports, and magazines.

A small, square walnut table alongside the desk held a phone. Several bookcases lined the walls. Over them hung framed testimonials and plaques—awards from the Knights of

Columbus, a Waterfront Man of the Year award, this club, that club, all kinds of mementos. Atop one bookcase lay a thick black scrapbook. Alongside it dust showed on the top-most of a pile of three or four smaller scrapbooks. The bookcases were crammed with an assortment of books—hardcover, paperback, oversize. Paintings were spaced along the walls, among them the *Flying Cloud*, a pierside scene, and the *Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge* at sunset. There was a TV set, stereo equipment, and a big collection of records in a cabinet. A large, black easy chair faced the TV set. A smoking stand, the ashtray loaded with cigar butts, flanked the chair. Two big file cabinets stood in one corner. Easy to see where Chips hung out when he was home.

The man was a bundle of raw nerves, pacing back and forth. But the woman sat down on a couch and remained quiet, her body stiff, biting at her lips. Pat edged himself out of the way, standing sideways to the bookcases, calmly running his eyes over the titles, in his quiet way taking everything in.

"Now, what's the story?" I asked, parking myself alongside the woman on the couch. "What's this about Frank Ponton?"

"My opponent," he sneered, "in the election day after to-

morrow. Okay, I don't own the union, he's got a right to run against me. A couple of days ago he told me he had something confidential to discuss with me. A nice, reasonable discussion. What could I lose? I thought. Why give him a chance, if I refused, to spread the word. I was ducking him? So I obliged him, met him at union headquarters. I was a fool. He told me I couldn't win, I should see the handwriting on the wall and withdraw from the election gracefully. It wouldn't be hard: just say it was in the best interests of the union. I laughed at him, told him I wasn't about to make a laughing stock of myself at my age by giving him a clear track."

"And then?"

"Then he got nasty, put on the hard man act. Well, better men than Frank Ponton have found out I don't scare easily or knuckle under to pressure. I told him I would whip the pants off him in the election, and to get the hell out of my office before I personally threw him out; forget about the age difference, I could still handle him."

"What did he do then?"

"He threatened me. Not directly. He said I'd be sorry. He'd hit me where I live."

"Were those his exact words?"

"His exact words. I'm sure he's behind this. Go to work on him. Break him down and you'll

get your answer. If he were in this room, I swear I'd kill him."

It was at that point that Pat leaned on his elbow on the big black scrapbook and nearly fell over when it toppled off the shelf. The book hit the floor with a thud, open at a middle page, and several large glossy photos fluttered out.

"How clumsy of me," Pat apologized, bending to pick them up. He arranged the pictures neatly and started to go through the book as if he were trying to find their original places.

"Never mind that," Bonney snapped. "I'll put them back later." He shoved them into the middle of the book without looking and put the book back.

"Let's get back to the beginning," I said. "Tell me just what happened."

"Go ahead, Cindy, you talk," Chips said.

"Well, first of all, I think Dad—my father—is wrong. I think my husband is responsible for this terrible thing."

"We'll get to him. Just start at the beginning."

Bonney plopped down in the easy chair and ran his hands through his hair.

Cindy said, "Laurie goes to Our Lady of Faith. A station wagon comes by every morning at eight o'clock to pick her up. One of the sisters drives the wagon."

"Is it marked?"

"Yes—the school name is on the side, in blue letters. The station wagon is gray. Laurie waits at the corner. The next child lives around the corner and three blocks down. Of course, there's more than one station wagon, more than one sister. This morning, like I always do, I watched from the window to make sure she was safely in the wagon."

"Anything unusual this morning?"

"Just one thing. It wasn't the usual nun, Sister Theresa, but a stranger. I didn't get too good a look at her, but she was fairly short and dumpy, a lot older than Sister Theresa. About sixty, I would say. I didn't think anything of the substitute driver at the time.

"When did you discover something was wrong?"

"When Laurie didn't come home, which is usually a little after three. I waited about fifteen minutes, then got worried and called the school. They were surprised. They told me Laurie hadn't been in school. Laurie has asthma and that keeps her home once in a while. I hope to heaven all this excitement doesn't bring on an attack. She's such a delicate little thing."

"So she never got to school?"

"The mother superior told me none of the nuns resembled the sister I described. I called the police. Ten minutes later she

called me back to say she'd also reported to the police . . ."

"I took that call," Chips interrupted. "One of their station wagons was missing, their extra one, the back-up. They checked because Sister Theresa did drive today and made her regular stops when Laurie wasn't there at the corner. That clinched it. I knew for sure it was Frank Ponton. A stolen car fits his style."

"No word on the wagon? It hasn't been located yet?"

"Nothing," Chips said. "The police are looking for it. Find the wagon, find the woman. Frank Ponton can tell you all about it."

"Now, Cindy," I said, "tell me why you think it's your husband who's at the bottom of this?"

"Because I won't let him see Laurie. I don't want him coming near her." She turned to Chips. "Why did you have to let Mousie in?"

"Use your head, girl," Chips said. "Would he show his face around here if he had the girl?"

"He's clever—a fiend. He'd know you'd think that."

"Nonsense," Chips said. "Mousie is not that clever. Mousie's not like that at all."

I asked Cindy, "Are you separated? Divorced?"

"Separated. Two years now. I'm filing for divorce next week. That was Mousie who just left.

He came in from California three days ago, and I can't get rid of him—phoning all the time, hanging around outside. I called the police, but he keeps coming back. I'm getting a court order to stop his pestering."

"He's got visitation rights," Chips was exasperated, "under the separation agreement, Cindy. You can't fight the law. You're just being stubborn and unreasonable."

"Do you think he would go so far as to kidnap her?" I asked Cindy.

"I wouldn't put anything past him. He keeps saying I have no right to keep him from seeing her, she's his as much as she's mine."

"He's right about that. He wants to get back with her," Chips said. "He's not a bad guy, wouldn't harm the child, that's for sure. You know that, Cindy. It'd be the best thing for Laurie. That asthma—that didn't begin until the two of you split up. Ponton—that's a different story."

"Do you know where I can get hold of him?" I asked Cindy.

"Try the sidewalk across the street," Cindy said.

"I mean, where is he staying?"

"He said I could reach him at the Hotel Gregory, downtown, if I had a change of heart and wanted to talk things over with him."

"Why the hell don't you?" Chips said. "I don't know what the hell you have against him anyhow. So he had a little trouble getting himself established. That was no reason to run out on him, come chasing back here, moping all the time. You belong with him, not me. Ah."

Cindy sniffed and wiped at her eyes. I'd noticed she hadn't denied it, though, when Chips said Andy would never hurt the kid.

I asked some routine questions. Chips hadn't gotten any phone calls about the kidnapping. Yes, he had a recorder hooked up to his phone; he used it all the time for union business. Sure, he'd record any calls from the kidnappers. He gave me Ponton's home address and phone number, the union's address, the most recent photo of the girl.

"I'll keep in touch," I told Chips. Chips was showing us to the door when the phone rang, and he headed back to the study to answer it.

As Pat and I waited at the door, Pat said quietly, "I don't see where I can help you very much on this one, Phil. Not right now. It looks to me like strictly a police matter."

"Okay," I said. "But if I think I need you, I'll give you a call—if it's all right with you."

"Sure," Pat said.

Chips was on the phone quite

a while. Then I heard him hang up. "It was the police," he told us, looking more worried than ever. "A patrol car located the station wagon. Abandoned, over at the old Dexter Street Ferry Terminal."

"So the kidnappers switched cars. That figures," I said.

Pat added his two cents' worth. "A very quiet spot. Nothing going on there. Deserted."

I could tell his interest was piqued. Why, I had no idea.

"Frank Ponton," Chips said. "Damned if it isn't Frank Ponton. Only someone who knows the waterfront would pick a spot like Dexter Street for the car switch. Like you say, Pat, it's a place where absolutely no one goes."

The phone rang again.

"Wait just a minute more," Chips said. "This might be important." When he returned he sounded excited. "I got that phone call." He motioned for us to follow. "Come and listen."

In the den he turned on the recorder. A husky voice rumbled out. Not particularly sinister. Not noticeably a waterfront voice. Getting right to the point.

"Lay off and you'll get the kid back. That's all. You understand. So smarten up. Give the word."

Chips said, "No question what that's about. I've been working

to stop loan sharking on the piers, really putting the screws to them. The chief one of the lot is a character named Grassi. Boom Boom Grassi. I'd like to nail him good. I've been getting some feedback on this business already—phone calls, messages. That phone call was some more feedback."

"Can you give me some names?"

Cindy was going to pieces, making strange noises in her throat, crying.

"Frank Ponton's pretty well acquainted with those boys," Chips said.

"I'll check it all out," I said. "Now, how about those names?"

He had the information on a rotary file—names, addresses, phone numbers, handouts. Tom this and Joe that; Freddie the Camel, Harry Scratch. Without further ado, we left. Mousie was nowhere in sight.

"Home for you, Pat?" I asked when I got behind the wheel. It was already getting dark. "I've got a lot of ground to cover."

"We've got a lot of ground to cover," Pat corrected me. "I'd been hoping to hear that. "But before you start rushing around, head for the Dexter ferry."

"Tell me how and I'm on the way."

As we drove I remarked to Pat that Bonney didn't seem overly happy at his tagging along.

"We're not exactly buddies," Pat said. "Over thirty years ago we crossed swords. He wasn't the boss then, just a shop steward at one of the Harrington piers. He was just starting to build his reputation as an up and comer. We knew one another, in a casually friendly way—hello, goodbye, a little chitchat in between. I made it my business to know all the union officials, steamship management, the stevedores, the longshoremen wearing hooks in their belts. As the district dockmaster, I had to come by that way every day to book wharfage for the barges tied up at the bulkheads between the piers and get the tonnage of the cargo stored outside the piers, what used to be called top wharfage—all revenue for the city." About then we had a new commissioner, a gung-ho type, who was going to change things, by golly. Custom and tradition be damned, he was going to clean up the waterfront. He had a little list, and right there at the top was the unauthorized parking of cars on the marginal streets, most of it by longshoremen. He was after other things, too, like unlicensed peddlers of food and ice cream, shifting of loads from truck to truck—which was common in certain areas for things like produce, eggs, butter—and indiscriminate dumping of trash. He

wasn't completely wrong, that commissioner, but he went at it wrong."

"What's a marginal street?"

"A street fronting the waterfront. 'Margin' is a quaint old term meaning the boundary between the water and the shore. Think of the margin on a sheet of paper."

"I get the idea," I said.

"Well," Pat continued, "without going into a lot of history, New York was losing ground as a port because of high port costs. One reason was the terrible traffic congestion. Just driving a truck to and from a pier was a time-consuming, nerve-racking hassle. The point is, it just wasn't the right time to press for any change that could cut labor productivity or increase port costs. Over the years we had more or less gone along with allowing the longshoremen to park wherever they could. It helped keep port costs down and so improved New York's attractiveness as a port. It was also good politics. Longshoremen vote, too."

Suddenly Pat broke off. "Pull up at that supermarket over there, Phil. There's something I want to get."

I was pretty puzzled by his purchases—a big box of chocolates and two big boxes of candles. He never touches chocolates, and I knew he had

a plentiful supply of emergency candles on the houseboat. But he didn't explain himself, just put his grocery bag in the back seat.

We drove on, down a narrow, deserted, cobblestoned street lined with what, in the dim glow of the street lights, looked like Civil War era warehouses. They were square-shaped and faced with grimy red brick. Most of the windows were boarded up. A horse and wagon would have looked more appropriate there than a car. Pat had me make a right turn. One block down, the street broadened out into an open space. A wide, high-arched building, fronted by a wooden fence, stood at the water's edge. It was covered with some kind of metal sheathing, its paint peeled away in patches. Bald spots showed the wood underneath where the sheathing had been stripped away.

"That's the Dexter Street Ferry Terminal," Pat said. "I see the pirates have been around, ripping off the copper a little at a time."

Another much smaller, one story brick building stood on a timber pile platform to the left of the ferry terminal. I could hear the irregular rhythm of the water slapping against the bulkhead, alongside which I parked. Keeping the battered and decaying backing log to our

right, we moved toward the brick building. A strong, musty smell of rotting wood, touched with the tang of salt, hung in the night air. Pat began to whistle "Tipperary." I didn't have the foggiest notion what had brought him to the old ferry, or why he had started to whistle. He could have been heard three blocks away.

We moved past the ferry building, which looked like some haunted, broken-down mansion. Pat kept up his whistling. From the side of the brick building facing the closest ferry slip I caught a sudden flash of light that snuffed out as quickly as it showed. A vague, barely discernible figure huddled just outside the building. A street light far across the wide plaza scattered lumpy shadows along the building's exterior.

"That you, Charley?" Pat yelled out. "I need to talk to you."

"Pat?" a voice came out of the shadows and the figure approached. "Pat O'Hara? Well I'll be."

"Who else would come your way whistling 'Tipperary'?"

The man came up close and the light fell on him. He was well up in years, over medium height, broad, just a little stooped. He needed a shave and tufts of thick gray hair poked out from underneath his watch cap.

"Invite us in, Charley. Phil here is okay. I'll vouch for him. Phil, meet Charley Ellis."

"Good to see you, Charley," I said. Charley grunted.

"I brought an offering for you." Pat handed him the bag. "Something useful in case of power failure."

Charley tucked the bag under his arm without looking at the contents and about-faced, leading us down the narrow, planked walk.

"Come in quick and close the door fast." He paused in front of the heavy metal door. "I don't like to advertise."

We slipped inside, and Charley slid a bolt into place.

"You've made some changes, I see," Pat said. "Not bad."

The place had all the comforts of home: wooden table, three or four chairs, a pot-bellied stove, wood stacked in a corner. In the inner room Charley led us to there was an old metal cot. A big stuffed easy chair, some of the stuffing popping out, faced a TV set. He had a radio, an electric clock, an electric stove, cooking utensils. There was a calendar on the wall. Magazines and books were piled on the floor.

"I see you're not having any trouble making the rent," Pat said.

"I manage," Charley grinned.

"I don't bother anyone and no one bothers me. That's the way

I like it. Con Edison'll never miss a little juice. Nothing to it if you know how."

Pat said, "Charley, tell us about the company you had today. The early birds. What kind of car, license number, what the woman looked like, whatever you can tell us. Let's see how good you are."

Charley shrugged. "You know I don't like being snuck up on, so I always check when I hear cars around. How about a dark blue four-door Buick, this year's model, maybe last year's." He fished in his pocket and hung a scrap of paper close to his eyes. "Yep. Here's the license number, if you want it. How's that? I kinda figured that information would be valuable, especially after I heard the news about the Bonney kidnap on the radio."

I jotted the information in my notebook. I also dug a twenty out of my wallet.

"In appreciation, Charley. What about the woman?"

"Phil's working for Chips," Pat volunteered.

"Well, let me see," Charley reflected. "Late fifties; early sixties. Glasses. She walked kind of with a limp, not too bad of a limp. Average height. Dumpy. A pleasant face. Dark skin. I'd know her in a minute if I saw her again."

"About the Buick, did you get a good look at the driver?"

Charlie shook his head. "He didn't get out of the car and his back was to me. He got there a few minutes before the station wagon and waited."

"How about the kid?" Pat asked. "Did she seem scared?"

"Funny thing about that," Charley said. "The kid didn't let out a peep, just came along quietly, as if they were old friends."

"How about the driver? Did she seem leery of him?" I asked.

"Not so's I noticed," Charley said. "Of course the kid's used to being around nuns, so why shouldn't she trust a man who's with a nun?"

"Pat," I said, "do you think it's possible the kid knew them? I wonder."

"Something to wonder about, isn't it?" He gave me one of his yes-no-maybe, don't-worry-about-it smiles.

To Charley Pat said: "Of course you haven't told any of this to the police." It was more of a statement than a question.

"Are you kidding?" Charley said. "And call attention to where I live?"

Pat nodded. He seemed pretty satisfied with Charley's information.

"You've been a big help, Charley," Pat said. "Anybody comes nosing around or starts giving you a hard time, be sure to let me know. We may be seeing you again real soon."

Back at the car, I said, "Now I get the Dexter Street connection. It gave you an inside track."

"Only if Charley was still here. This has been his squat for almost ten years now, since he decided to chuck work and live his own way. He's an intelligent man. Used to be an electrician and general maintenance man at the piers. You wonder what gets into a man like that, just drops out. He gets a social security check and has a nephew somewhere out in Bay Ridge, a checker over at Bush Terminal. Don't get to feeling too sorry for him. He knows what he's doing, and it suits him fine."

As we drove to Lacey's Marina, Pat picked up his yarn about Chips Bonney.

"Anyhow," Pat's spiel went, "the order came from up top to clamp down on the longshore parking. I didn't come in like gangbusters and hit them without warning. I went to all the shop stewards, told them what was in the works. I ran it down privately for Chips from A to Z. He'd get a chance to clean up the situation in his own way, give his men the bad news the street parking freebie was about to end. I made it clear it wasn't my idea to turn on the heat, the orders came from upstairs. I gave my unofficial opinion the fuss would blow over, as it always had before. Ride with it

for the time being, I advised. Maybe some top dog in the union could reason with the mayor's people, get the mayor to pass the whisper to the commissioner to call off his dogs. There were some pretty good arguments. A lot of the piers—like the Harrington piers—were hard to get to by public transportation. There was no place to park nearby, even for anyone willing to pay. If the longshoremen were forced to pay to park, the added expense would get tacked on to the union demands come next contract-talk time and hike the high port costs that were already hobbling the port.

"I spoke to Chips on a Wednesday. The following Monday and Tuesday, if necessary, I would put warning notices on cars found parked where they didn't belong. Any cars there the following Wednesday would be ticketed by the boys in blue. He'd do his best, Chips assured me. He understood there was nothing personal in it. He even thanked me for coming to him first and not pulling an ugly surprise out of the hat. It was a nice friendly talk between two guys who were both unlucky enough to be holding the same fistful of thorns."

"Like the problem we're dealing with now," I remarked.

"Not quite," Pat said. "This

one is more like a fistful of air." He went on. "The day after my talk with Chips, the street was jam-packed with cars when I made my rounds, actually no more and no fewer than usual. I got some dirty looks. The longshoremen had obviously gotten word I was breaking chops. How much of the full story Chips chose to tell them, I didn't know. Okay, it wasn't so bad. The real action wouldn't begin until the following Monday. I supposed they all figured they had a couple of days' grace so why bother doing anything different for the time being. Friday was the same. I didn't run into Chips either day.

"On Monday I attracted a crowd. Almost as soon as I showed up and started putting the warning notices under windshield wipers, the longshoremen came hustling over. They were hopping mad. When I said I had my orders, they jeered, called me a Mickey Mouse dockmaster. A big crowd was milling around when Chips made his entrance. He came striding over, all purpose and determination, his eyes fixed on me, face stony. What the hell is going on here? he challenged me. Just as if it all came as a surprise to him and it was incumbent on him to protect and defend his men from an obvious injustice. He delivered a speech about guys like me ruining the

waterfront, making it tough for hardworking men to earn an honest living. We're entitled to this space for parking, he shouted. That's what the waterfront's for. You've no right to come around here with this harassing tactic. Go back and tell that to your commissioner. You can bet your bottom dollar he's going to hear about this. And the mayor, too. And the borough president. And the whole damned world. You'll pull in your horns. Why don't you go about your business like before, not get in the way. Be a good boy, go over to Gilligan's and have yourself a beer. The men were not going to get pushed around, not while Chips Bonney still had a tongue in his head. . . . The men cheered him, and he kept at it for a good fifteen minutes, working them up. The pier superintendent came running over to find out what the ruckus was all about. If there's any work interruption, any sailing delay, Chips bellowed, don't blame us, this guy right here, the dockmaster, is responsible.

"Chips was trying to belittle and intimidate me and, most of all, build himself up as the forceful, tough defender of the longshoremen's rights. He was showing them he was a guy who wasn't afraid to get out front and take the heat. I didn't argue with him. Anything I said,

he'd turn around and fire right back at me. His mind was as quick as his tongue. . . . Stop at that market, Phil. We'll be needing some groceries."

Back at Lacey's we knocked together a fast meal. I peeled the potatoes, and he fried the onions his special way to go with the hamburgers. We did our phone work. Bonney had nothing new. Ditto the police. Pat reported the Buick license number anonymously to police headquarters. He then called up his police sergeant son and asked him to advise him fast, off the record, of what developed from that information, even if the police decided, as Pat thought they would, to hush it up. A few minutes later, Pat learned that the car's registered owner was one Walter Ferguson, an insurance executive, who lived in Pelham Manor. The car had been stolen from almost directly in front of the Greenwich Village night spot Ferguson had been in.

I called Frank Ponton at his home, stated my business, but avoided telling him whom I was working for. He was belligerent at first, didn't see any reason to talk to me. He'd already had a bellyful with the police. Then he calmed down. He had nothing to hide. He would see me at union headquarters in the morning and get me off his back.

Andy Laporte, Cindy's husband, wasn't at the hotel. I left word: would he please wait for my early morning call.

Pat made a couple of later phone calls, too, from the living room while I was busy doing KP in the kitchen. From what I gathered, he was talking to some theater, which wasn't unusual since he makes a practice of taking his teenage grandchildren to shows and rock concerts. He claims he is the oldest living rock fan.

He joined me in the kitchen.

"Not much more we can do now. What do you have in mind for tomorrow?"

"Touch base with Bonney first. Then go to the mat with Frank Ponton, and sometime during the day have a talk with Andy Laporte."

"You have to touch all bases," he nodded approvingly. "You can be sure the police are watching Ponton and Laporte, and a few others as well. Bet you ten to one it's a waste of time. Neither of them would dare make any false move now. For the time being, don't waste any shoe leather chasing Boom Boom Grassi. Suppose you meet me at Gilligan's around noon. It's right opposite the Harrington piers. Let's hope that Buick's not at the bottom of the river. Where it shows up might tell us something. But if it doesn't show up, we still have an angle

or two to try. Come on, let's watch the news."

The coverage of the case was extensive. Footage of Cindy, tearfully addressing a plea to the unknown abductor. Then Chips, his deep, rich voice repeating the message with equal passion. Somehow he managed to tie in the kidnapping with rotten elements hitting at him because of his unwavering efforts to bring order and decency to the waterfront. He was the honest, humble man being trampled on for his noble efforts. He came across as an entirely sympathetic, likable figure.

"He hasn't lost his touch," Pat said. "The old master knows how to get to people. . . . That's enough. We can skip the Middle East news. A week from now when this mess is all over there'll still be a crisis in the Middle East."

We were both up early. I phoned Andy Laporte, who got wide awake in a hurry when he found out who was calling and why. Look for me at Gilligan's at noon, I told him. I called Bonney, who'd just got word from the police. A car involved in the kidnapping had been found just outside the Morton Street pier on Manhattan's North River, a skip and a hop from the Greenwich Village night spot outside which it was stolen. Bonney was very curious about the

source of their information. He didn't see how the police could have latched onto it on their own.

A minute later Pat's son called with the same news.

Pat smiled one of his maddening, thoughtful, private smiles.

"Looks like we're it," he said. "Would you drop me off at the subway? There are some old friends I'd like to look up."

I shrugged. "Why not?" I didn't ask him why, and he didn't tell me. He's that way, keeps things to himself. But I sure as hell was wondering what he was up to.

Ponton had a small office toward the front of the street level union headquarters, a store between a pizza place and a bodega. The front desk receptionist, practically sitting in the window, buzzed Ponton's office, told me to go right in. A burly, hard-faced young man, ugly as a llama, stepped out through Ponton's door, the top panel of which was frosted glass, just as I reached it. He must have spent many hours practicing the sneer he turned on for me.

Ponton was standing alongside a flat-topped desk. He was tall, broad-shouldered, lean. He filled his well-tailored suit as if he'd just posed for a clothing ad. He had a long, narrow face;

a narrow forehead under medium long, well-styled wavy hair; dark bushy eyebrows over brown eyes; a firm jaw. Not at all bad looking. At the moment he looked pretty ferocious, ready to chew me into little pieces. A sensible barracuda would have backed off from him.

"You can drag ass back to Chips and tell him he's wasting his time sicking you on me, Fendel," he came at me for starters.

"The name is Mandel, Phil Mandel. Want me to spell it for you? And don't go jumping to conclusions about whom I'm working for. All I want to hear from you is what you can tell me about Laurie Laporte, where I can find her."

"How the hell would I know?" Ponton demanded. "Am I her nursemaid? Why don't you ask Chips? Maybe he can tell you."

"Maybe you heard a rumble through the grapevine, a rumor," I said. "Maybe you have some ideas of your own."

"I just gave you my best idea," Ponton said.

"Try some other idea," I said.

"What kind of idea?"

"Like maybe the shylocks might know. Say Boom Boom Grassi."

"Grassi?" he laughed. "Boom Boom? You must have concrete between your ears. With his record he wouldn't try anything like that. He's a businessman."

"Some business," I said.

"He gives what some people want, what they can't get at a bank, helps them out. That makes him a businessman."

"Is it true Chips has been trying to chase Boom Boom and his pals off the piers?"

"Where'd you get that?"

"From Chips."

"If Chips says so, you can believe him if you want. If you do, you'd believe in the tooth fairy."

"Why shouldn't I believe him?"

"Boom Boom hasn't set foot inside a pier in months. Did it ever cross your feeble mind that Chips is stringing you along?"

The blood vessels under the skin near his temple were jumping. Through the glass panel I could see the silhouette of his musclemán, waiting outside in case he was needed. Ponton stepped toward me.

"First it's kidnapping, then it's going easy on the money men," he spit out. "Just who the hell do you think you are, coming around here with that kind of talk?" He kept coming.

"Take it easy," I backed up a step.

He didn't stop till he was close enough to reach out and wrap fingers around a top button, near my throat, of my trenchcoat. He tugged at the button.

"Your button is loose, Fendel," he said. He pulled at it

hard, and the button came off in his hand. "Here." He shoved it up under my nose. "You better get it sewed back on."

I reached up and grabbed at the button. As I pried it out of his fingers, I let the swing of my arm carry through. My fist brushed his chin, just lightly, but with my other hand, the left, I reached up and grabbed a handful of lapel and tugged the jacket toward me.

"Nice needlework there," I said. "You got a good tailor. Call him up, tell him Phil Mandel is coming over to order a suit."

He shook free, glanced toward the shadow on the door's glass, and faced me aggressively.

"Keep your hands off me, you cheap dumb flatfoot. Don't ever try that again."

"We're even now," I said quietly, but not mildly.

"If you're the new waterfront breed, I'll string along with the old."

"There's no use continuing this conversation," he said. "There's nothing I can tell you."

"Oh yes there is," I said. "You haven't finished telling me about Boom Boom."

"Boom Boom doesn't go near the piers. He works out of a couple of bars, and a coffee shop. Even the police can't stop him from buying himself a booze or a cup of coffee."

That was some kind of answer, anyhow.

"Bad luck in tomorrow's election," was my parting shot.

I took a little walk, to cool off, before heading for Gilligan's, which was only a couple of blocks away. A big sign atop the one story rectangular, red brick building identified the place. It was located on the marginal street opposite the piers. Five or six ships were in, and the street outside them was a jumble of activity. Cargo—packaged goods—was being unloaded onto pallets from trucks and the pallets hustled along by hilos into the piers. Other trucks were picking up freight. Tractors were hitching onto containers to haul them away. Checkers, clipboards in their hands, were verifying the cargo transfers. Big overhead hoists swung containers off the ships and onto the long wide aprons along the sides of the pier sheds. On the back swing the hoists picked up the big silver boxes and stacked them in the ships' holds.

A steady stream of customers flowed in and out of the restaurant. The roughly-dressed men trooped in on their breaks in groups of two or three for coffee and cake, tap beer, whisky, food. The huge bar took up about three quarters of the space along one wall. Food service accounted for the rest—a big metal coffee urn, assorted pas-

tries, hot meats, a hamburger and hot dog grill. Dozens of plain wooden tables were scattered across the black and white tiled floor. Three or four waitresses, none young and pretty, were working. A middle-aged, seedy looking man with vacant eyes shuffled around pushing a broom, gathering dirty dishes and glasses. Between clean up expeditions he leaned on the end of the bar, resting, running his eyes over the tables. Savory smells of meat roasting and soup cooking drifted out from the hidden kitchen to mingle with the general aroma of beer. A haze of cigarette and cigar smoke shaded the air a gray-blue. A jangling juke box magnified the din of conversation. A nice lively atmosphere. I felt right at home there.

I bought myself a hot roast beef sandwich and a cup of coffee and carted them past inquiring glances to a table. Everyone going past my table examined me. I knew enough about waterfront ways to understand they were "making" me, trying to get a handle on who I was and what brought me there. Hardly anyone gave me a second look. Just another cop was their conclusion.

The beef was tender and tasty and by eleven o'clock a happy memory. I abandoned my cold coffee for some mahogany around the middle of the bar.

A tall, slender, dignified bartender, who looked Irish enough to be a Gilligan, drew me a beer. I nursed it, wondering if Andy Laporte would show, and waiting for Pat, without whom I felt lost. The truth was, I was nowhere, and confused by my session with Ponton. Suddenly it occurred to me. I should have checked in with Bonney instead of stuffing my face. The loan shark deal needed clarification.

I got up off my butt and phoned Bonney. On the loan shark deal, Chips said, of course the Waterfront Commission made it tough for the known sharks to operate on the piers. The commission worked hand in hand with the police; together they kept close watch. But new legmen were always being recruited, and the faces shuffled around, so it was a constant battle. Also, the sharks ran a lot of their operations off the piers, making it that much harder to keep tabs on them. But the union had its own ways of discouraging them no matter where they operated. What Bonney was trying to do was dry up the whole operation. Frank Ponton was handing out a lot of smoke if he implied otherwise. It wouldn't surprise him any, Bonney said, if Ponton himself had some sub rosa connection with the big bankrollers.

Otherwise, Bonney had nothing

to tell me, except that I was his only hope. He didn't expect any real results from the cops.

Back at the same spot at the bar, I hired myself another beer. About a quarter to twelve Andy came in, stopping just inside the door. He looked around like a mouse nosing out a safe corner. He was wearing a windbreaker and blue jeans. His long hair was standing out in all directions. He caught my wave and came over, looking worried and haggard from lack of sleep. I ordered a beer for him and said, "Sorry to bother you this way. I'm trying to help."

"I appreciate that," his voice was squeaky soft. "Man, you don't know how worried I am. All these troubles."

"Your wife thinks you're putting on an act," I said. "She thinks you have the kid."

"That's a laugh," he answered. "Believe me, if I had the kid, I wouldn't be here. I'd be in California by now, let her come chasing me."

"What has she got against you?" I asked.

"A long story." He reached for his beer. "Let me give you the high spots. When we got married, I was an artist, a painter. I thought I could make it, and might have, if I'd stuck with it. But the kid came along, and she got nervous and impatient. Forget all that art nonsense, she told me. Get a job.

Anything where you can make a living. But she didn't give me a chance. She just, upped and left me, hit me where it hurts. I was crazy about that girl, still am. I'd never do anything to hurt her. That you've gotta believe."

"Sure," I said. "I believe you."

"When she ran home to Chips and I saw she had no intention of coming back to me, I headed for California. What was the use in hanging around? The bottom line was that I couldn't hack it as an artist. That was hard to swallow, when being an artist was all I'd been interested in since I was a kid. She knew what I was all about. Hell, that's why she married me. No nine to five guy for her. There's a little snob in her. Being married to an artist sounded great, glamorous, exciting, all that stuff. She's a little mixed up. I guess Chips spoiled her. But maybe she'll settle for me now that things are different. I'm still not nine to five. Now it's more like seven to ten, that's seven A.M. to ten P.M. Got myself a little take-out chicken place over in North Hollywood. Doing okay, too. I want her to come out and join me, put on an apron and help me run the place. Get her back in the world. Give me a little time to paint. I haven't quit on myself yet. With her help, I still have a chance to make it."

"Sounds good to me," I said.

Pat was at the end of the bar, chatting with the sweep. He must have just come in. I said to Mousie, "I get the impression you hit it off pretty well with Chips."

"We always got along," Andy said. "He always told me not to let money be a problem, he would finance me till I got established, Cindy didn't have to know about it. Like a damned fool I didn't take him up on that. Too proud. Too stubborn. But I didn't think she'd leave me."

"Let me make a wild stab," I said. "Chips paid your fare back east, didn't he?"

"He loaned me the money," Mousie said.

"The idea was his, wasn't it?"

"To come east now, yes, but I would have done it as soon as I could afford it."

Pat slid in alongside me.

"One more question," I said to Mousie. "Give me a straight answer, one name. Who do you think did it?"

"Ponton," he said, after some hesitation. "Who else could it be?"

"Let's get going, Phil," Pat said.

"Where are we going?" I must have looked blank. "Don't you want to hear what Andy had to say?"

"Along the way," Pat said. "Remember, we've got an ap-

pointment. See you later, Andy. Keep your chin up. Things will turn out all right."

I asked Pat, once we were outside, about the appointment.

"Just come with me. You'll find out."

Pat can make a mystery of anything. The mystery to me was the way he apparently was uninterested in what Andy had told me.

Hoofing the five long uphill blocks, I had a hard time keeping up with Pat. His long legs could really chew up the sidewalk. I tried to get him to open up, but he didn't say ten words and didn't want to hear about Mousie. He was smug as clams before the invention of chowder. I came close to telling him so.

We reached the avenue he wanted.

"Lunch time," he stopped outside a place called the Norske Bakery. Inside, very clean, and very much an eatery. Pretty busy, too.

We took a table and Pat ordered split pea soup and a meatball sandwich from a neat, smiling blonde waitress. I couldn't just sit there taking up space during lunch hour. The service was fast, and Pat's food looked so good I ordered the same. It was as good as it looked. We were down to coffee when a guy walked in and parked

himself at our table. Gilligan's sweep, but somehow not the same—the stumbling, fumbling, not-quite-with-it manner missing, as if he put it on and took it off like a shirt.

"Phil," Pat introduced him, "this is Luke, never mind his last name. An old friend of mine."

"Pleased to meet you, Phil," Luke said. "I've heard a lot of good things about you."

That came as a surprise to me. I didn't know the man from a Seminole Indian chief.

"Luke hears a lot of things about a lot of things," Pat said. "What he doesn't hear is not worth hearing."

I got the picture. An undercover man it wouldn't benefit anyone to talk to at Gilligan's. I didn't want to know what his outfit was.

Pat came right to the point.

"Luke, what's with the election?"

"Well," Luke said, "till yesterday it was nip and tuck, with Ponton having a slight edge. Today? Chips, pretty big, because of what happened with his granddaughter. They're a funny lot, these longshoremen, the way they go for the underdog. To them, right now, voting for Ponton would be like kicking Chips when he's down."

"Good enough," Pat said. "Thanks, Luke. Any chance Ponton could have done the kid-

napping? How do you read that?"

"He's capable of doing almost anything to get what he wants." Luke looked thoughtful. "But what the hell would he gain?"

"Just one more question. What's with the loan shark business these days?"

"Not as open as it used to be but still going strong, off the piers. The big boys keep shoving new faces onto the scene, the fronts keep changing, it's hard to keep up with it all. Pretty discouraging. Like shoveling the stuff against the tide."

"Much obliged," Pat got up to go. "We owe you one."

On the way back to the waterfront and my car, I gave Pat a fast version of my talk with Andy. When I finished all he said was, "That man's chicks will come home to roost, or my name is not Patrick James O'Hara."

When we got to the car, I asked, "Where to, Pat?"

"You've got to check in with Bonney to keep him happy. Seeing as he doesn't exactly have the welcome mat out for me, just drop me off at the subway and I'll meet you back at Lacey's later. I've got some more business uptown. Pretty urgent. Got to get my costume for the masquerade party. I forgot to tell you. You're invited, too."

I bit my tongue to keep from asking questions I knew he wouldn't answer.

Bonney was calm, the majestic, stricken lion. He had one piece of information. He'd received another phone call, not more than fifteen minutes ago. He played the tape for me. Another nondescript voice, making a simple statement: Got the message yet? Let us know, and you'll get the girl back.

"What do you make of that?" Bonney quizzed me.

"My advice is, get the message to them. Save you a lot more trouble and grief."

"The sharks," Bonney said. "I've thought it all out. It hurts, but I can't give in to them."

"What about the danger to the kid? What about your daughter? Don't be such a martyr. People will understand."

He shook his head.

"If I knuckle under, that's the end of me, all I've stood for all these years. I'll have to take my chances."

"If that's your decision, you'll have to live with it," I said, finding it hard to understand his thinking. I changed the subject. "If you want my opinion, the voice on this tape is not the same as on the other one."

"Maybe you're right, but what difference does that make? We don't know how many people are in on the deal."

"How about making a copy of both tapes for me. Just maybe I'll be able to run down someone who can identify the voices."

"Have you notified the police?"

"Not yet," Bonney said, setting his machine up to put the messages on a blank tape.

The front door opened and Cindy breezed in, lugging two big brown bags. I'd wondered where she was. I had my answer: out shopping. Where were all the cousins and aunts who could be expected to come over, pitch in with the shopping and cooking, just be there to give sympathy and moral support?

"Dad, Mousie is hanging around outside, wants to come in," she said. "He followed me to the store. I couldn't get rid of him. He insists he has to talk to me. Please go and chase him away. He'll listen to you."

"Why the hell shouldn't he talk to you?" Chips said. "He's your husband, isn't he? He's worried about Laurie, too. I can't understand you, Cindy."

"He wants me to go back to work to him." She broke into tears.

"So what's so bad about that?" Chips said. "When will you come to your senses?"

Bawling still harder, she headed into the kitchen with the groceries. She was going through a rough ordeal. I wondered if Chips wouldn't change his mind.

"You'll be here all day tomorrow, won't you?" I asked. "I mean, you're not going to the office?"

"I don't budge from this house

until the girl is back," Chips said. "The hell with the election."

"Good luck, anyhow," I said.

I was just about to leave when the phone rang. Chips listened briefly. Holding the instrument away from him, he yelled toward the kitchen, "Cindy, take the phone, see who it is. Sounds like one of Laurie's friends."

"Hello," she spoke hoarsely into the phone.

Chips stood facing her, looking stern. Cindy glanced toward him. She looked frightened, almost terrified. I could understand why. Chips was a formidable, domineering man who had no sympathy for weakness.

"She's not here now. Thanks for calling, dear," Cindy said, then hung up.

"Who was that?" Chips asked, watching her closely. "Someone playing games?"

"Just one of Laurie's friends," Cindy said calmly, the frightened look gone. Instead there was suppressed anger, puzzlement, resentment.

Chips shrugged.

Something was going on between those two, some wordless communication from which I was excluded. A family matter too private to let a stranger in on. I knew better than to pry.

I left, wondering about that phone call. Mousie, on post,

across the street from the house, did not approach me. I headed for Lacey's. The same dark green Olds kept popping up in my rear view mirror.

I parked in Lacey's lot near the street end of his pier. Pat wasn't home, but I had a key. As I opened the door, I saw the Olds cruising slowly past the parking lot. Ponton's ugly brute was behind the wheel. The tail didn't bother me. I'd expected some kind of attention from Ponton.

I called home. My wife answered. She seemed reasonably glad I was still alive. There were no messages.

I fixed myself a sandwich and had a beer. I had just sat down when I heard Pat struggling down the ladder nailed to the side of the pier. I went out. He was juggling two big, bulky cardboard boxes, the kind used for packing garments. In the end he chucked them down onto the deck near the front door.

"What's that you got there?" I asked as he set them down inside.

"Our costumes for the masquerade party," Pat answered. "We've got to be up real early tomorrow. Shave in the morning, Phil. Real close. But no aftershave lotion, and no powder."

"Sure," I said. "I always shave in the morning, especially when I'm going to a sunrise masquerade. . . . Bonney got an-

other call. I have a tape of it here. In fact, I've got both calls on one tape."

"I kind of thought he'd be getting another call," Pat said.

I told him about my visit to Bonney. He listened attentively, smiling when I reached the part about the phone calls and my sensing the flow of communication between Chips and Cindy.

"I suppose we might as well have a listen to the tapes," he said. His face remained expressionless as he played them through twice.

"Well, is it two different voices, two different people?" I asked.

Pat shook his head. "Two different voices—out of the same throat."

"One person, disguising his natural voice?"

"Something like that," Pat said. "Another small piece of the puzzle, if you can call it a puzzle. What a farce! . . . Let me get something to eat, and we'll watch the late news and try on the costumes. You must be dying to hear about the masquerade. Mine fits. I've already tried it on. Yours is the biggest I could get."

The news was no news. The only thing that meant anything to us was Chips's promise, when he made his appeal, to do whatever was necessary to get the girl back unharmed. I took that

to be a carefully veiled answer to the phoned messages. Evidently he'd changed his mind.

When Pat opened the boxes and I got a good look at what was inside, I almost fell over laughing. But after he explained what he had in mind, my laughter subsided and I paid strict attention. He was right about my outfit. It was pretty snug. Pat's an inch or so taller than I am, but I'm much bulkier. When we got down to serious business, I would have to walk gingerly, take small steps to keep my feet from showing, and breathe carefully to keep from busting a seam.

Early in the morning, after a quick breakfast, Pat made a phone call. I had to hand it to him. He was perfect, speaking in a sweet, high-pitched voice but not overdoing it. He made a very convincing Sister Patricia, and said just the right things.

"Pat," I congratulated him, "you missed your calling. You belong on the stage."

"Too much competition," he shook his head. "I'm just an amateur."

"Pat," I said, "this is the hairiest stunt you've cooked up yet. Do you honestly think we can fool those two dames?"

"Just as long as you don't talk and spill the beans, there's nothing to worry about. Take

my word for it, it'll come off smooth as glass."

How could I argue with him when he was so confident? Pat *had* to know something I didn't know. He was way ahead of me. The doubts kicking around in my head must surely have already occurred to him. Each lugging a box, we went up the ladder. We had to make the step from boat to ladder carefully. The flooding tide had swung the houseboat about two feet from the pier. I went up first and said to Pat as he struggled up the wooden rungs, "We've got company."

Someone was walking down the pier toward us.

"Mandel." The guy's voice was pure sandpaper. "I got something to give you." The face was familiar. Ponton's goon, his arm outstretched, held a small object in his hand.

"For me?" I said. "Whatever it is, I don't want it. Take it back."

"Take it," the guy said. "You better take it. It's needles. You'll know what for."

The goon and I were standing practically nose to nose. He tried to slip the package into my pocket. I sidestepped, toward Pat, who was standing beside me, the bulky box under his arm. What happened next happened very fast. I bumped into Pat, knocked him sidewise. He lost his grip on the box. He

sort of stumbled against the backing log. As he tried to regain his balance without losing control of the box, he lurched heavily into Ponton's goon. Somehow their legs got entangled. The next thing I knew the goon was tumbling, feet first, over the side of the pier, slamming against the timber side sheathing on the way down. He got hung up between the houseboat and the pier. The boat started to rock, putting the goon in one fine predicament. He was stuck there, right foot and right arm jammed against the pier, left foot and left arm pressed against the boat. He had to maintain some pressure against the boat to keep from getting squeezed between the boat and the pier. But if he leaned too hard, the boat would swing farther away from the pier, making it that much harder to keep himself from falling into the drink. There wasn't a handhold or a foothold anywhere.

Pat leaned over to call down apologetically, "Sorry about that, young fella. Do you know how to swim?"

"I can't swim," the goon yelled back. He was frantic, all the rough out of him. "Get me out of here."

"Nothing to worry about if you fall in." Pat said encouragingly. "The water's not deep. Lacey says it's like a tennis

court down there. Just keep working on it and you'll be all right. Yell loud enough, maybe someone will come along and throw you a rope. Come on, Phil, we can't hang around."

"Give the needles back to Ponton," I said "with my compliments. Tell him to take up the tailor business."

On the way over to Charley's Dexter Street hideaway I asked Pat what had happened. I hadn't bumped him that hard. He gave me a slow smile.

"Well, there are two ways you can explain it. Either I lost my footing and a fortunate accident occurred—or the foot is quicker than the eye."

At Charley's we changed into our costumes. Without asking questions Charley stood watch outside. At his all-clear signal we piled into the car.

In Manhattan we parked outside a brownstone house on a narrow Greenwich Village street, deserted at a quarter to seven. I trailed behind Pat up the flight of stone steps and stood behind him, maybe trying to hide, as he rang the doorbell. Again I couldn't help thinking Pat's crazy idea, giving him due respect, wasn't going to work; the doorbell would go unanswered, the door wouldn't be opened, we'd go away empty-handed. The car we came in raised a question. Why would nuns from Our Lady of Faith

be using a private car and not a school station wagon? And our size? One jumbo nun might pass muster. But two hulks like us? Most of all, it didn't seem right they'd hand the girl over to anyone at all, under the circumstances, without first getting the okay from Chips. I know if I were in their place I'd have checked with Chips the minute Sister Patricia hung up.

Pat pressed the bell again. We could hear it ringing inside. I held my breath, waiting.

A woman's voice called from behind the door. "Who's there?"

"Sister Patricia, come to pick up Laurie and take her to school." Pat's voice was more contralto than soprano, but the way he projected it rang true, even down to the convincing Irish lilt. He carried himself stooped over, but he still made a very tall nun. He kept his hands pretty well hidden in the billowing sleeves. I did the same. Not much of my face showed. I had the hood bunched around my head. I stood off to the side, bending my knees to make myself appear smaller and so that the billowing bottom of the habit would keep my size fourteens from peeping out.

The door opened a crack and an eye peered through the opening. We passed inspection. The door swung open. Chips's sister, dressed in ordinary street clothes, looked a lot like

him—hair and eye coloring, complexion, the generous nose, the strong chin. Middle-aged and stockily built, she matched Cindy's description of the woman she saw drive off with Laurie. A little makeup, an unfamiliar getup, a phony limp, a disguised voice—and she'd fooled the child completely.

"Come on in. Laurie will be ready in a minute," she said.

"We'll wait right here," Pat said pleasantly. "I hope the child won't be frightened of us."

"Why should the child be frightened of two lovely sisters?" she said, throwing a look at me.

I had some momentary doubts but smiled my most beatific smile. Sensibly I said nothing. Pat had sworn me to silence anyhow.

Footsteps and voices sounded inside, one voice a child's. Then Laurie appeared, bright-eyed and fresh looking. Beside her was a woman—thinner than the first one, white-haired, but strongly resembling the other.

Pat said, "Remember, Chips wants you to be absolutely quiet about this. Don't talk to anyone about it or there could be trouble. Don't call Chips at home today or for the next few days. The wrong person might answer. Chips said the police might have a tap on his phone. He told me to warn you about that."

"Don't worry," the stocky

woman said. "We won't give Pete away."

"Come, Laurie," Pat smiled and took the girl's hand, "you're going to school with us."

"Remember what I told you, Laurie dear," the stocky woman stooped to kiss the girl. For an instant I had the feeling she was staring at my feet, but she gave no sign anything unusual caught her eye. "You don't know where you were and whom you were with. Don't forget now. All you know is a sister drove you someplace you never were before. You don't know what sister it was. She was a stranger. Be a good girl."

Swinging her school bag, Laurie came along quietly, as if this were something she did every day. I couldn't help thinking how much she reminded me of her father. She looked and acted like a little mouse.

I nodded my most benign farewell to the two women and we were on our way. On the drive to Brooklyn, Pat talked with the girl and got her to loosen up. I almost drove through the rail on the Belt Parkway when she casually mentioned she knew all along the nun who picked her up was really her aunt in a costume. She brightened when Pat told her she'd be seeing her father, saying she hadn't seen him for a long time and really missed him.

I dropped her off at the back side of the square-block school grounds where a high stone wall shielded us from view. At Dexter Street we shed the habits, loading the boxes into the car trunk. We drove to Gilligan's, had a bite, and hung around until the election returns started coming in. Chips buried Ponton.

Back at the houseboat Pat wound up his yarn about Chips.

"On Tuesday I quietly repeated my warning notice act. It went easier and faster this time. I had a copy of the list and plate numbers handy and just had to put a check mark alongside the repeaters, which most of them were. Another thing, no one bothered me. I could just as well have been in Siberia. I went about my regular business, booking my vessel and cargo wharfage, checking the piers' housekeeping. I ignored the dirty looks and comments about my ancestry. Passing the parked cars on my way out of the area, I saw the notices, stripped from the wipers, scattered all over the pavement. That was an act of defiance, a message. They were going to battle me all the way. Chips was nowhere around, and I didn't go hunting for him.

"Wednesday morning I wasn't surprised to find the street loaded with cars. I made my prearranged call to the local

precinct. A few minutes later a patrol car rolled up. Two officers got their little black books out and began writing. I didn't intend to hide behind the cops, so I joined the party as a more than casually interested observer. The cops worked fast. Chips came charging out, but the police disregarded his pleas to go easy. He was shouting that it was customary to allow the cars to remain there unmolested as long as they didn't impede traffic flow or block waiting lines. The cars weren't in the way, they weren't bothering anybody. Longshoremen came streaming from the piers, looking to try to drive their cars off and beat the ticketing, but the cops wouldn't let them. They were playing it my way. In this thing up to my eyeballs, I wanted all the cars ticketed, and the police backed me up. Fair was fair. Why should some get away scot free and others get hammered? Apart from the legalities involved, it was now a matter of principle and self respect with me. I wasn't going to let Chips make a fool of me. Face is all-important on the waterfront. Lose it, and you lose respect. Only an absolute idiot could fail to understand that Chips was pulling the strings, had probably told them not to worry, he would handle everything. Among other things, Chips was testing me, seeing

how much he could get away with. As far as I was concerned, that was nothing.

"Chips kept up a non-stop harangue. I'd hear about this. I'd find myself banished to the Bronx, the Staten Island boon-docks, the ass end of Queens. The commissioner would hear about it, the mayor would get an earful. He poured it on. I gave him my stock answer. If he had enough influence with the commissioner or the mayor to square it, go right ahead and do it, that was okay with me. He shot off on a different tack: the area wasn't posted. The summonses wouldn't stand up in court.

"The area wasn't posted, that was for sure, but the legal question that posed was no concern of mine. I didn't tell Chips that, just let his tongue roll on like old man river. Just wait and see, he assured me, he would take care of everything. His men weren't going to get horsed around. They wouldn't have to pay any fines. They wouldn't even appear in court. The whole deal was a big crock.

"By then my Irish was up. I told him, good and loud so the whole circus wouldn't miss a word, that they'd be ticketed the following day, and the day after that, and every single day for as long as they were dumb enough not to stop. I had a job to do, and that was that. This

stirred Chips up all the more. He raged and ranted. He guaranteed all kinds of dire things would happen, I'd live to regret the day I tangled with him. He rolled his eyes, sneered, was sarcastic, waved his arms, stomped around, cursed—but not at me directly—shook his finger at me. But he was vague, and too smart to threaten me with physical harm. He knew that beating up on a city official performing his duties was more than he or anyone else on the waterfront was big enough to get away with.

"Well, the police finished. I thanked them for their fine job and support and asked them to drop around tomorrow for a rerun of the show. They rolled away, and there I was, alone with Chips and his loyal followers. In a final grand gesture, he went from car to car, gathering up the summonses. Go on back to work, don't worry about a thing, he told the men. Let's not be the bad guys in this. Let's keep the cargo moving, and put on a little extra hustle to make up for the lost time. Let this Mickey Mouse dockmaster with his tin badge—he pointed an accusing finger at me—let him be the bad guy. The men let out a cheer and marched off to work en masse, leaving Chips and me alone.

"What was that all about, Chips?" I asked. "What the hell

are you trying to do to me?"

"He stuffed the summonses quietly into his pockets, one handful into each pocket of his suit jacket, a few into an inside pocket. He grinned at me.

"You know how it is, Pat," he said conversationally. "No hard feelings, no harm done. I had to do it. I couldn't back down. You know that."

"You told them to ignore the warnings," I said. "I put it all on the line for you. Why didn't you do it my way and avoid all this fuss? You know as well as I do this will blow away."

"Sure, Pat," he said. "I agree. But I had to do it this way, for my own reasons. You can understand that."

He was just as calm and relaxed as could be, not at all like a man who'd just poured out his guts in a big emotional scene. The amazing turnaround took me by surprise. He had no intention of battling with me. From his point of view, there was no reason to. I couldn't have picked a fight with him if I'd tried. He made it seem what had happened was all in the day's work for both of us.

"Let me tell you something, Pat," he said. "There won't be any more ticketing here, or anywhere else. Not for a long time. And there won't be a nickel in fines paid."

"Maybe you're right," I said.

"And that was the end of

that. Really the end of that."

"What happened?"

"Chips had it right," Pat said. "That same day a delegation from the union, headed by the international president, met with the mayor at the mayor's office. My commissioner, a deputy commissioner, some other department people, the borough president's executive assistant sat in. The upshot of it? The ticketing was suspended while a committee appointed on the spot—it included Chips and the commissioner—was set up to study the problem. Next day the dockmasters, on our morning call—we all phoned in twice a day, morning and afternoon, from the district—got orders to hold off."

"What happened with the tickets?"

"The consolidated case came up in court a week or two later and the judge dismissed them on two grounds. First, the tickets were erroneously issued because the area was not posted, no matter how the departmental rule read. Second, in view of the fact that the entire matter of suffering—that was his word—longshore parking on the waterfront merited and was being accorded careful study, the issuance of tickets had been hasty, ill-considered, and unfortunate. Those might not have been his exact words, but that was the thrust of them."

"What happened with the study?"

"Nothing," Pat said. "Absolutely nothing. Time dragged on and the committee, if it ever met, never issued a report. The whole matter was forgotten, swept into a dusty corner. By default the tradition of permitting, or suffering, longshore parking on the marginal street was upheld. Chips called the shots absolutely right. He became a union hero, and from then on, he advanced fast. Sure, we made our peace, after a fashion, after a while. But the coolness between us never thawed. He was wary of me, and I was wary of him. But he respected me, never tried to pull any underhanded stuff with me again."

He fell silent.

"You finished with your story?" I prompted. "What's the point of it?"

"The point? It was a performance, an act, all the way through. Done with the master's touch, and getting just the audience reaction he was playing for. He had the audience in his pocket, and milked his lines for all they were worth. A professional actor could have taken lessons from him."

"And he's been putting on another show?"

"Yes indeed. A good one, too."

"What put you onto him?" I asked.

"Well," Pat said, "when I

walked into Chips's den with you, this parking episode popped into my mind. It was what I remembered best about him, what I associated with him. Then something about the scrapbooks hit me as being odd. All except one were covered with dust. This meant the clean one was handled a lot, the others ignored. Why the interest in the clean one and not the others? Something about Chips I'd all but forgotten came back to me. In his young days in Greenwich Village, Chips was an actor. More than fair, too. And versatile—Shakespeare, comedy, impressions, even song and dance roles with off-Broadway groups there. I had a hunch there might be a connection between this fascinating scrapbook and his dim past."

"So you knocked the scrapbook over on purpose so you could check it out? I should have known."

"Clumsy of me, wasn't it?" Pat said. "But you might call it a case of making the chips fall my way."

"Anyway, what I saw was enough. Reviews, photos, programs—positive evidence he'd never lost the bug. You know what they say: the stage is an incurable disease. Once you catch it, you never get it out of your blood. Then there were the bookcases. The waterfront books you'd expect. But what about

the Burns Mantle and other play collections? Shakespeare, Pirandello, O'Neill, Ibsen, Williams? The critical literature. Enough books on the theater to stock a library. That's where his heart was. Can't you just picture him, alone in that den late at night, going through the scrapbook? Reliving his triumphs, and always haunted by the question: had he made the right choice in giving up the stage for the piers? Wondering if he might not have made it big, been happier, gotten more out of life?"

"The old what-if," I said. "We all go through that."

"I suppose you noticed his reaction when the scrapbook fell open. He didn't appreciate my prying into it. He was afraid I understood his style well enough to put two and two together. He tried to hustle me out of the way, but he was too late. He knew right off I was onto him, he couldn't hope to fool me twice in the same way. From then on it was just a game we were playing."

"A game?" I said. "Let me get this straight. You knew right along Chips set up the girl's disappearance. Yet you still let me get tangled up with Ponton and his goon? You let me go chasing after Mousie, and you dragged me around to Charley Ellis and Luke? Why? That's a hell of a way to treat a friend."

"It had to be that way, Phil," Pat answered. "You had to have something to report to Chips, show him you were out hustling to earn your fee. Charley? Charley was our starting point. We had to wait till the stolen car showed up. We knew Chips had the girl, but not where.

"Luke? Again, it was something to report to Chips, and give us a little something to do. Besides, in your line of work Luke is a good man to know.

"Anyhow," Pat went on, "back to what put me onto him. The whole thing had a phony ring to it from the beginning, and especially after I saw that scrapbook. It stood to reason, then, that the fake nun in the wagon was someone really close to Chips; someone he could trust implicitly; someone who wouldn't think twice about doing something not quite kosher. Someone like a sister and if that someone could play a part, so much the better. There were pictures of her in the scrapbook, too. She worked with him in the theater in the old days. Friends in the Village tracked her down for me. That she lived so near where the Buick was stolen and where it turned up later clinched it for me that she had the kid tucked away in her home. For a guy like Chips, with connections everywhere, arranging to 'borrow' a car for a while was

no problem at all. Chips wanted a stolen car so the car used couldn't be traced to anyone close to him in case anything went wrong. And in the same way, getting the school station wagon was easy as lifting a Hershey bar from a candy store counter. The man who drove Chips's sister in her nun getup to Brooklyn was one of Chips's trusted boys, a young, friendly type who wouldn't upset the girl.

"After dropping off Chips's sister where the stolen station wagon was stashed away, the driver went on to Dexter Street to wait for her. Chips wanted the station wagon to be found at Dexter Street and figured it wouldn't take more than a few hours. You hit it pretty close, Phil. The girl had probably seen the man at Chips's house. She saw through her great-aunt's disguise right off the bat. So the kid knew she was safe. How's all that sound?"

"About right to me," I said.

"The masquerade was just our own lead-in to the final act. The minute we left Chips's sister, you can bet she got on the phone. Two nuns our size? Your big feet? She had to spot us as phonies. It wasn't quite the script the way Chips wrote it, but she improvised."

"I thought I caught her inspecting my feet," I said.

"How could she miss those

canal boats?" Pat said. "She knew we were frauds beforehand, anyhow. I'm also sure she called Chips as soon as I finished my Sister Patricia phone act. And Chips would have caught on at once that 'Patricia' was my signature and I was onto his scheme. He told her to go along with the gag and not to let on she knew we were phonies. It was as good a way as any of getting the kid back where she belonged, and the staged kidnapping had served its purpose, the election was over.

"By the way, I learned something else yesterday. Chips had a different nickname in his young days. They called him 'Barrymore.'"

"Where'd you get the habits?" I asked.

"Same place Chips's sister got hers, the Village Warehouse Theater. But renting any kind of costume is no problem in Manhattan, at half a dozen rental places."

"I guess I should have known that. To tell the truth, Pat, I had my own suspicions about Chips. Mousie didn't strike me as a kidnapper and Ponton—what could it get him except a lost election and maybe real bad trouble."

"It was all a bravo performance—the tirades against Ponton, the loan shark red herring, his TV histrionics, the faked

tapes. He knew Cindy would help along by sounding off about Mousie. In a nutshell, it was Barrymore Bonney, the frustrated actor, in his most glorious role, at the same time shafting Ponton and selling the world on what a great guy Chips Bonney is."

"Building sympathy and winning the election."

"Exactly. But Chips had more than the election in mind. His second purpose was to get his daughter out of his hair and back with Mousie for a fresh start in California. That's going to happen, too."

"How do you figure that?"

"Because she knows, and is boiling mad at her father for using Laurie as a pawn. Cindy's hysteria got to him. He couldn't just stand by and watch her push herself into a nervous breakdown. So he had his sister call his house and put the kid on the phone with Cindy, just long enough so Cindy could hear the kid's voice. You weren't supposed to be there when that call came. Chips had a bad moment then, but he got his message through to Cindy to play dumb. She did, saying the call was from Laurie's friend. But you yourself noticed the change that came over Cindy, how much calmer she suddenly was. Cindy knew the kid was absolutely safe where she was, and understood her father had cooked up

the phony kidnapping to win the election. But that didn't make it any easier for her to accept what he'd done. She was hurt and angry and not ready to forgive him. Still, she wouldn't think of betraying him. Chips had all the angles figured. He knew the heartless way he'd fooled and misused Cindy would make her turn to Mousie. Who else did she have? Of course the one angle he had no way of figuring was my unexpectedly turning up with you."

"Quite a plot he schemed up," I said. "Now we know why none of the family came around to lend a hand in the crisis. Chips's sisters were busy holding the girl."

"Now we've got a problem," Pat said.

"The police. Do we go to them or not?"

"The last thing Chips needs is for the police to find the girl was at his sister's. Then he's in trouble. They'll never run that down on their own. You weren't supposed to find her, either. Chips didn't think you had a prayer. He hired you for window dressing, to chase around and make him look good. The kid's just showing up, out of the blue, is the ending he planned. . . . I'm a little tired now. I think I'll take a nap."

"I can use one myself," I said. I had an idea Pat really wanted some time to think. He has a

well-developed sense of right and wrong. I had a few qualms myself. Was it our moral and legal obligation to go to the police with what we knew?

We arrived at Bonney's at a quarter to three. A dry-eyed Cindy let us in, then excused herself, saying she had things to do.

She brushed past her father huffily.

Bonney gave Pat a strange, what-you-here-again look but said nothing.

"Congratulations, Chips," Pat said. "You pulled it off."

"Pulled what off?" Chips snapped back, more quickly than was necessary.

A bigger question was in his eyes.

"The election, of course. What else?" Pat said. "The way you swamped Ponton."

"That doesn't get the girl back." Chips brushed aside the congratulations. "Who gives a damn about the election?"

Chips wasn't trying very hard to conceal his annoyance over Pat's being with me and speaking up.

My part was to smooth that over.

"I had to drive Pat somewhere," I said. "I'll be taking him home in a few minutes."

"You're always driving Pat somewhere. What the hell are

you, his chauffeur?"

"Pat's a very good friend," I said. "I owe him a few favors. And the job's about wrapped up."

"What job's over?" Chips demanded. "You haven't even begun. Produce the girl, then the job's over."

"She'll be along in a few minutes," I said.

"How do you know that?" he glowered.

"I can't tell you that. Just take my word for it. She'll come walking through the door. That should be good enough for you."

"I hope you know what you're saying," he said fervently, raising his arms in a dramatic gesture. "I'll be thankful to you to my dying day."

"My fee will be thanks enough," I said. "How about getting it ready right now?"

Chips hesitated, and looked nervously toward Pat. Pat had picked up the big scrapbook and was leafing through it, shaking his head and smiling. I didn't think Chips's nervousness was entirely put on. Of course he knew we'd picked up the girl and how we'd done it. But he couldn't openly admit that, by word or manner. So Chips, playing out the charade, was on the spot. He was stalling, searching his mind for a way to save face with Pat. Years before Chips had come out on top when they tangled. Now the situation

was reversed. Pat was playing with him the way Chips had played with Pat on the marginal street parking—and Chips knew it.

"Fair enough," Chips finally said. "How do you want the money? Cash, I suppose. Will that be all right?"

"Cash suits me fine," I said. "A check could end up a headache for both of us." And Pat also, I added, silently.

Chips dug into a locked desk drawer, riffled a satisfactory pile of hundreds from a bundle, snapped a rubber band around the bills, and then stuffed the money into an envelope.

"There it is." He slapped the envelope down on a clear spot on the desk. "The girl walks in, you pick up the money and leave. No more conversation, no questions asked. I don't see you again. Either of you. Our relationship is ended."

We settled down for what proved to be a short wait. Right on cue, the kid came trooping into the room.

"Grandpa," she dropped her books and ran to him. "Am I glad to see you. Why didn't you talk to me the other day?"

"And I'm glad to see you," Chips bent over and buried her in his arms, covering up beautifully, smooth as old scotch. He was a pro. "Your grandpa not talk to you? Never! You just got something wrong, made a mis-

take," he kept the words flowing. "You're all right, aren't you? Cindy, come on down," his voice boomed, strong enough to carry to the farthest seat in the biggest theater. "Laurie's back home."

It was a shame, really. He deserved a bigger audience.

"I'm fine," Laurie said. "I was at—I'm not supposed to tell where I was at."

"Of course," Chips said. "You don't know where you were at."

Chips, all smiles, finally looked at me and then toward Pat. It was a signal of dismissal, for us to get moving and keep our mouths shut. Pat, already heading for the front door, turned to say, "We're even now, Chips. You know what for."

"Touché. I think I just got a lesson from the master."

"Correction," Pat said. "I learned from the master."

I scooped up the envelope just as Cindy almost tumbled down the stairs in her haste to reach her daughter.

"Laurie, Laurie," she cried, "I've got wonderful news for you. You're going to pack. I'll help you. We're going to California, to live with Daddy. Isn't that the greatest news? Are you

hungry? Go wash your face . . ."

Chips, the old fraud, was beaming, his smile genuine, as smug as can be. All was right in his world.

Cindy was still babbling when we hit the street.

"An incredible man," Pat said, as we got into the car. "But a good one at bottom. I didn't have the heart to throw him to the wolves. But don't you think he didn't know that."

"The abominable showman," I joked.

We drove to Dexter Street, where Charley Ellis got something better than candles. On the way back to Lacey's, I asked Pat how it would come out.

"Well," Pat predicted, "the police will accept Chips's explanation that the girl simply turned up without knowing where she'd been or with whom. In a few months Chips will plead ill health and resign as president of the union. His hand-picked vice president will step up to the top spot until the next election. Chips will waste no time moving to California to be near his family. Cindy, of course, will relent and forgive him."

Pat had it figured right. He usually does.

UNSOLVED

by
George J. Summers

Unsolved at present, that is, but can you work it out?

The answer will appear in the August issue.

One evening five explorers named Wilson, Xavier, Yeoman, Zenger, and Osborn made separate camps along the banks of a river. Wilson communicated with the other men by radio at various times during the night. When he received no reply from Osborn after 10:30 that night, Wilson communicated with the other three men to express his concern. The next morning Osborn was found dead; he had been murdered. Evidence at the scene of the crime indicated that the killer had approached Osborn's camp by boat from the river. Each of the men had had access to a canoe on the previous night. Wilson suspected that either Xavier, Yeoman, or Zenger had killed Osborn. From the following facts Wilson was able to eliminate two of these men as suspects:

1. Osborn was killed in his camp before 10:30 on the previous night; he had been shot and had died instantly.
2. The killer traveled to Osborn's camp and returned to his own camp by canoe.
3. Xavier's camp was located directly downstream from Osborn's camp, Yeoman's camp was located directly across the river from Osborn's camp, and Zenger's camp was located directly upstream from Osborn's camp.
4. It would require at least 80 minutes for each of the three men to get to Osborn's camp and to return to his own camp by canoe.
5. There was a strong current in the river.
6. Wilson received replies to his radio calls at the following times:

FROM	AT	FROM	AT
Xavier	8:15	Yeoman	9:45
Yeoman	8:20	Zenger	9:50
Zenger	8:25	Xavier	10:55
Osborn	9:15	Yeoman	11:00
Xavier	9:40	Zenger	11:05

Which one of the three men could Wilson not eliminate as a suspect?

"A Timely Death," taken from New Puzzles in Logical Deduction by George J. Summers, copyright © 1968 by George J. Summers, Dover Publications, N.Y., N.Y.

See page 131 for the solution to the June puzzle.

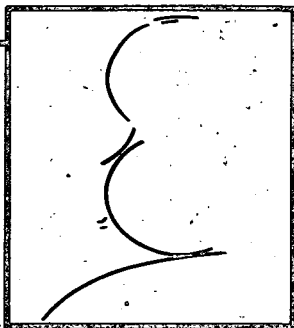


Robert Hays and Margot Kidder in *Trenchcoat*.

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MURDER BY DIRECTION

by Peter Shaw



For the past year or so movie directors have been reminding viewers just how many ways the detective genre can be stretched. *Blade Runner* and *Kamikaze '89* combined detection with science fiction, *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* mixed in old movie nostalgia, *48 Hrs.* comedy, and *The Amateur* foreign terrorism. *Trenchcoat* offers a female amateur detective, along with a mix of comedy, romance, travelogue, and international intrigue.

Margot Kidder plans to transform herself from a working girl into a mystery writer during her vacation in Malta. While she is worrying over having failed to turn up any juicy material, she is actually in process of becoming, Hitchcock

fashion, the innocent "woman who knew too much." Every international criminal on the island begins to stalk her.

The movie takes a bit too long to establish this much, and it tries a bit too hard to milk the situation for laughs. Once Margot catches on that she's in trouble, though, the action picks up nicely. If only she hadn't donned an actual trenchcoat and slouch hat. The detective parody didn't need such props.

And another thing. It isn't enough to repeat famous scenes from Hitchcock movies, as so many directors like to do these days. Something interesting has to be done with the parallel once it has been brought up. While being chased, Kidder finds herself thrust out onto a nightclub stage—calling to mind

Robert Donat's finding himself in front of a political rally during a chase in *The 39 Steps*. But instead of getting into the act—Donat, you remember, had to make up a speech on the spot—she simply leaps off the stage and runs away. This just isn't good enough.

Nor is it enough to put a woman in the position of the tough-guy detective, and then have her do little more than whimper while being chased, kidnapped, roughed up, and thrown in jail. A lady detective should either rely on her wits like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, Patricia Wentworth's Miss Silver, and Craig Rice's Hildegard Withers, or else really be tough like Christie Opara, the creation of Dorothy Uhnak, the former New York City Transit Authority investigator. Television has certainly shown the way with Laura Holt of *Remington Steele*, the two heroines of *Cagney and Lacey*, and Lucy Bates of *Hill Street Blues*.

On the other hand it has to be said for *Trenchcoat* that in it the plot, the clues, and the possible suspects fall nicely into

place. Finding oneself able to keep track of all of these makes for a pleasant change. Screen mystery is usually a good deal harder to follow than the written kind, and a good argument can be made for keeping it simple, as *Trenchcoat* does.

It's not too late, by the way, to catch up with one of the movies mentioned above. We liked Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy in *48 Hrs.* As a cop and a criminal who have to solve a case together, they make unwilling but effective partners. The action and the laughs, which are fast and funny, never let up.

The mystery play *Moose Murders* opened and closed on the same night on Broadway. Afterwards it gained renown as possibly the worst play of the decade. The *Playbill* for *Moose Murders* is said to have become an instant collectors' item. It goes to show how demanding the "lowly" mystery really is as a genre. (Unfortunately magazine reviewers like this writer don't get to attend plays until the *second* night.)

FRAMES OF REFERENCE

by Peter Christian



Just when it appears that the public passion for screen adaptations of **Agatha Christie** has quieted, some interesting new work catches hold and Christie fever begins anew.

That was surely the case a decade ago. In the 1960's Christie fans had to satisfy themselves with a series of somewhat routine program mysteries featuring a Miss Marple played more for comedy than for earnest village sleuthing and a Hercule Poirot case, *The Alphabet Murders* (with Tony Randall as the detective!), that virtually abandoned the novel for its own incomprehensible plot.

Then *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974) roared in, elegant and baffling, and Christie mania was ignited again. So popular did her Belgian detective once more become, the authoress consented to release from the vaults the manuscript of her final Poirot investigation, *Curtain*, which she had meant to have published after her death. On screen, *Death on the Nile* (1978) followed, with Poirot pursuing murderers among the Egyptian tombs. The first authentic portrayal of Miss Marple was filmed in 1979. In *The Mirror Crack'd*, an extensively madeup Angela Lansbury was superb as the crisp, elderly spinster. An avid fan of the Marple books, Lansbury carefully recreated the character down to the last detail—and could only be faulted for the single after-dinner cigarette she insisted on having Marple smoke. In 1982, Poirot returned to discover *Evil Under the Sun*—again an elegant backdrop against which lounged celebrity suspects, and with the smoothest, best script adaptation

of all (by Anthony Shaffer). Simultaneously on television, Helen Hayes—who would have been an acceptable Marple—played a snooping victim in *Murder Is Easy*.

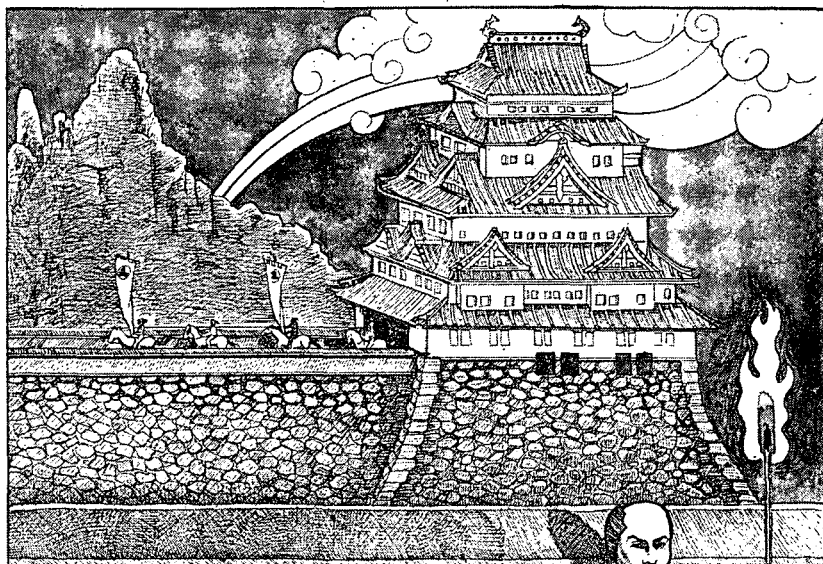
Neither *The Mirror Crack'd* nor *Evil Under the Sun* was a box-office success, however, and plans for further theatrical productions seem dropped. Into the breach, thankfully, has stepped PBS. The *Mystery!* series, which this past season also tackled Father Brown and Sergeant Cribb, recently presented American audiences with four delightful "unknown" Agatha Christie short story dramatizations (actually culled from a British series by Thames Television called *The Agatha Christie Hour*).

No Poirot or Marple here; the stories are early, romantic, and even slight—not so much twisty mysteries as quiet, simple tales of period passion. The old fashioned plots are made even more appealing by the lush productions given them, an irresistible sense of times past. As Vincent Price notes in one of his introductions, the Christie world abounds with stately homes and an aristocratic life now mostly vanished. In these four stories, the writer heralded as "The Queen of Crime" (although she herself preferred "Duchess of Death") deals mainly with stolen love—and stolen long ago.

The first yarn is almost a Scott Fitzgerald lark, and revolves around a sporty new motor car. (In her autobiography Christie exults in the liberation that learning to drive gave her—opening up horizons beyond her home boundaries.) "The Manhood of Edward Robinson" presents us with a cheery young man who, feeling himself hemmed in by a somewhat straight-laced fiancée, secretly sets off in his new auto for a daring visit to a wild dance club in the country. There he meets a pretty, madcap socialite dabbling in cat-burglary—he thinks—and concealing stolen jewels in her expensive evening frock. It's all spirited fun, deliciously sparkling.

The second story, "Magnolia Blossom," is more somber. Should Theo spurn her lover and return to her ambitious husband when she learns he has been involved in embezzlement? The handling suggests Somerset Maugham. In "The Red Signal," murder occurs at a seance. And in "The Girl in the Train," another young fellow itching for adventure crosses paths with a mysterious woman pursued by a man claiming to be her uncle.

This quartet of simple tales does not measure up to great drama, but abounds in lace-frilled, innocent charm—a pleasure to view. Agatha Christie once said that her work was of no importance, and that "once dead ten years, I'm sure nobody will have heard of me." She was rarely so wrong.



The Faithful Gardener

by Ron Butler



The task before us was simple enough, nothing to tax the intelligence or strength of two capable men. It was a quiet Sunday, and Police Inspector Toshihiko Ueki and I were going shopping for our wives.

"As it is a fine day," the in-

spector suggested, "why do we not walk to Ishima Shopping? The exercise will do us good."

I calculated. At a brisk pace, we could make it to the *supa*—the supermarket—in twenty minutes. Allowing fifteen minutes for shopping and another twenty for the return,

we should be back in less than an hour.

"Good idea, Toshihiko." I went to the kitchen, where Noriko and the inspector's wife Hanako were practicing culinary swordsmanship with an array of knives and choppers, assembling the ingredients for dinner. "Do you have a shopping list, Noriko?"

She turned her head and smiled. "That will not be necessary, Sam. All we need are *pan* and *tamago*."

"Bread and eggs. That's all?"

"Unless," she said, "you and Father see some things you would like."

Ueki and I crossed the bridge spanning the stream, then turned right and strolled past the Ohayo Dairy, the laundry, a modest rice paddy, a tobacco stall, and the stationer's shop. A left turn at the thoroughfare intersection took us by the Tsushima Tei noodle restaurant, a sake store, and, on the corner, the butcher's.

Ishima Shopping, a short distance from there, was a narrow building, but long. In the front was a pharmacy to the right, a liquor section slightly beyond that, then specialty areas for hardware, electrical appliances, magazines, and rainwear.

We stopped at the bakery counter, debating whether to take the thin-sliced loaf or the

slabs of sandwich bread. "One of each will resolve the issue," Ueki said. He put the items in a handbasket.

That left the eggs. But to get there meant a trip by the fish market. Women with long polka-dot dresses and white aprons were stationed by ice-filled bins, calling out the virtues of fresh catches of fish, still-live octopus, and crab, clams, and mussels.

"This red snapper looks good, doesn't it?"

"But expensive," the inspector said.

Why not splurge a little? Profits from the computer hardware business I directed were up.

"One of these," I told the vendor, touching a fish large enough to provide sashimi for a meal. Then I added some thick salmon steaks and a sack of clams for *misoshiru* soup.

The eggs were in front of the meat counter. Oxtails were on sale, so I asked for five hundred grams of those and took another four hundred grams of sliced bacon—the nonfatty kind that doesn't shrink to a third of its original size when cooked. We put the eggs in with the meat and headed for the check-out lanes.

"*Ichi man yen*," the girl at the counter said.

I gulped and handed over ten thousand yen. How did Noriko

stick to her budget? I asked aloud.

"By keeping you away from the store," Ueki said. I gave him the heavier of the two packages, and we started for home. The rest of the day, as I had mapped it out, would involve a cold beer in the garden, a good dinner, and then an outing with Kenji and Jotaro, our twin boys. I looked at my watch and saw that we were running only half an hour behind my calculations. Not bad, I thought, for a lazy Sunday afternoon.

With studied indifference, Minoru Ageta stood with his back to the desk as his man checked him into the *ryokan*. The polished wood furnishings and artfully-arranged potted plants in the lobby gave the old-style hotel an aura of respectability, of dignified quiet and spaciousness, which Ageta thought appropriate for a man of his wealth and power.

A maid took them down a carpeted corridor and opened a door of rice paper panels, then bowed as they entered the airy tatami room.

"No tea," Ageta said to no one in particular. The maid bowed again and closed the *shoji*.

"You have been in Okayama several weeks," Ageta said. He sat down on a cushion before a low table. "I want to see the re-

sults." He shook a cigar from a plastic tube and put it in his mouth.

Etuzo Yoshitomi picked up the hotel matches in an ash-tray, struck one, waited for the sulphur tip to burn off, and held the flame to Ageta's cigar. He put the matches in his pocket before placing a large packet on the table and untying the strings.

Ageta sorted rapidly through the five-by-eight photographs. "You have indicated times and places on the backs?"

"Hai." Yoshitomi drew closer to the table. "They are arranged in sequences to show daily patterns, and were developed by our own source in Osaka."

Minoru Ageta made two separate stacks of the pictures, ultimately settling on a series of three taken with a zoom lens. "Was there much variation in the times?"

"No. They have been in the same place, always on Sunday, between five and six in the evening."

"Today is Sunday," Ageta said, "and the hour is early. Return to your own hotel, make your preparations, and check out. When the job is completed, go back to Tokyo. I will remain to enjoy the aftermath."

Etuzo Yoshitomi backed to a distance of respect, bowed, and let himself out of the room.

Walking across the room and opening the heavy drapes, Ageta looked out into a courtyard containing a small fishpond. An older man and woman, dressed in informal kimonos, were feeding scraps of bread to the carp.

Ageta laughed. The city of Okayama was also a pond of fat, rich carp, ready to be fished for profit. So were the other major towns of western Japan. It was a satisfying prospect. In all Japan, there were only three other *yakuza* leaders who rivaled his importance, and after today he would have a secure foothold in the new territories.

Sitting down again on the floor cushion, the Tokyo gang chieftain gazed at the photographs. The backgrounds were varied, as were the times of day they were taken, but each displayed the same person—Police Inspector Toshihiko Ueki. Sometimes Ueki was shown by himself, occasionally he was in the presence of that foreigner, Sam Brent:

That the policeman was marked for death was no cause for regret. Ueki was a strong adversary, one worthy of Minoru Ageta's personal interest, but above all else, this was business. Ueki's successful activities in fighting organized crime were highly publicized throughout Japan, in large part because Ueki was trusted and respected by the media and by

large numbers of public officials.

Ageta allowed himself another smile. He was too sophisticated to believe that the slaying of one man would deter many law enforcement people, but it would cause hesitation among some. Each pause would allow him to refine his orchestration of bribery, intimidation, and extortion. Other sharks, scenting fresh blood, would swim into Ageta's waters after Ueki's death, but he was skilled at *yakuza* infighting, ready to meet attempted incursions by the Tokyo-based mobs with a show of force. One of his first moves would be to align the minor local criminals under his own banner, destroying those who were too ambitious or too greedy and leaving a corps obedient to his wishes.

And yet, Ageta admitted to himself, despite his purely-business considerations, killing Ueki would also erase the humiliation of his two previous attempts on the police inspector's life. Both had failed, one in a crowded railway station and the other at an isolated ski lodge.

This time, there would be no mistakes. Tomorrow, Ageta decided, he would slip among the mourners as the priests bade farewell to Ueki's soul.

Ageta eased himself onto the floor bedding. After a nap, he

planned to turn on the television and await the first news bulletins.

Our Sunday family gatherings with Hanako and Toshihiko Ueki had come to mean something special for all of us. Hanako and the inspector were devoted grandparents, typically Japanese in the care and attention they lavished on infants and children. These family meetings began with a recounting of the week's progress Kenji and Jotaro had made: discovery of their hands, laughing at their own reflections in the mirror, learning to roll across the floor, and their happy bubbling and cooing when they were introduced to the joys of applesauce and custard.

On the Sunday the inspector and I went grocery shopping, all of us assembled for a time before the television to watch a rerun of one of the many movies about Musashi, a real-life samurai of the seventeenth century whose strength of character and deeds with the sword earned him a permanent place in the national consciousness of Japan. I go for any kind of well-made swashbuckling flick myself, and it was apparent that Inspector Ueki did, too. Whenever Musashi put the bad guys in their place, Ueki smiled in satisfaction. Natural for a cop,

I thought to myself.

During dinner, the twins sat in highchairs for the first time, and we took our meal with a fair number of interruptions for laughter, the wiping of tiny mouths and chins, and praise.

"They deserve a long walk, I believe," said the inspector.

"Right you are." I knew that Ueki could hardly wait to get into his cigarettes. It was no small measure of his affection for the boys that he refused to smoke inside in their presence. I rolled the baby carriages out onto the concrete patio and we deposited our charges in them.

"Enjoy yourselves," Noriko smiled, "but please have them back in time for their baths."

The inspector got behind Kenji and I took Jotaro. We bumped our way over the gravel driveway and stopped at the bridge to watch the rain-swollen stream as it lapped at its banks. Behind us, next to the rice paddy, Mrs. Hashimoto waved from her veranda, and in front of the general store facing the thoroughfare, I saw Mrs. Sakai watering her potted begonias.

The man who turned onto the bridge from the main street slowed when he drew near us, looking down at the babies and smiling. I was preparing to return the gesture when, with no warning, his hand shot out and a knife disappeared into In-

spector Ueki's midsection. He twisted it upward savagely; and Ueki stumbled against the steel railing and fell, mouth partly open, eyes on me as his hands began to slip from the handlebars of Kenji's carriage.

"I came as soon as I heard about it," Mayor Yukuo Kawahara said in a sorrowful voice. "Mrs. Ueki, Mrs. Brent, you know how highly I regard Toshihiko Ueki."

We were standing outside the intensive care unit of Okayama National Hospital. A few minutes earlier the chief surgeon had told us the prognosis was grave: the knife caused major damage to stomach and liver, and despite massive transfusions before and during the surgical repairs, Inspector Ueki's chances of regaining consciousness, of surviving the night, were virtually nil.

The shock of the physician's words equaled that of the brief sight of the inspector we were allowed as he lay in a web of wires and tubes, a heart monitor beeping from a bank of instruments on the wall.

"Brent-san?"

"Yes? I'm sorry. I wasn't listening, Kawahara-san."

"It hurts me to ask this of you at such a time," the mayor said, "but it is absolutely necessary that we go to Okayama Police Headquarters without further

delay. You understand . . ."

I did, perfectly. A man was dead because of me. "Noriko, Ueki-okusan . . ."

"Go, Sam," Noriko said. "Mother and I will stay here." Outwardly, at least, they were calm, but I suspected that anguished tears were not far below the surface.

The sun, a pale, bloated orange, was still above the mountaintops when Mayor Kawahara's driver reached headquarters. I was not under arrest: Inspector Ueki's fellow officers made that clear from the start. There was a witness, Mrs. Hashimoto, the neighbor woman responsible for calling the police and an ambulance as Etuzo Yoshitomi's body floated out of sight.

The safety of the babies had been my immediate concern, and I thought that pursuit of Ueki's assailant was out of the question. As he had turned to flee, however, I stuck out my foot and tripped him, sending him over the railing in a twisting flop.

"The fall didn't kill him," Mayor Kawahara said as we sat in an interrogation room drinking black coffee. "The man drowned, and his inability to swim was no fault of yours. Even if it were otherwise," he added, "you would have been justified in acting defensively to protect your sons and your-

self from a vicious assassin."

That might have been legally accurate, but it wasn't the whole truth. I knew I had turned away from the man's pleas for help as he groped for a handhold on the banks of the stream; instead I was working desperately to staunch the blood from Ueki's wound.

Whatever I was going to feel about it later, this sure as hell wasn't the time for guilt. "What else do you know about him, other than his name?"

The officer taking my statement seemed eager to help. "Not much. There was a driver's license, issued in Tokyo, and about sixty thousand yen in his pockets. And this." He pushed a box of wood matches across the table. "It is from the Pine Grove Ryokan."

I picked up the soggy matchbox. "You think that's where Yoshitomi was staying?"

"No," the officer said. "We have verified that he checked out of another hotel earlier today. Yoshitomi asked the clerk to call for a cab, and one of the drivers has told us he delivered a fare to a place near the bridge an hour before the inspector was attacked."

"If he stayed somewhere else, how'd he get matches from the Pine Grove Ryokan?"

"That's what we are working to establish," the mayor said. "We have two of our men at the

hotel now in plain clothes." He got up. "I think we should return to the hospital."

I was afraid of the news that might be awaiting us.

His stunned disbelief was quickly replaced by anger as Minoru Ageta watched the latest bulletin.

"... and is now reported in grave condition at Okayama National Hospital," the announcer was saying. "Hospital spokesmen have promised to release hourly medical reports on Inspector Ueki's condition."

The announcer's face faded, replaced by a taped film of a body being lifted from a stream in Tsushima District.

"... the assailant has been identified by Okayama police as Etuzo Yoshitomi of Tokyo, and Mayor Kawahara has announced a massive police effort to determine if others were involved in the assassination attempt. We now return to the regular program and will provide new developments as they arise."

Ageta slammed the flat of his hand against the television switch. There was, he thought, no way Yoshitomi could be linked to him. Or was there? Suppose Yoshitomi made telephone calls from the hotel, calls that could be traced to his lieutenants by checking the switch-

board records? Yoshitomi's orders were explicit: no calls and no careless conversation while he was in Okayama; but could a subordinate ever be trusted completely?

He must not panic, Ageta knew, but it would be folly to remain in Okayama with so many angry hornets about. It would be prudent to be back in Tokyo.

Ageta hurriedly stuffed his belongings into his shoulder bag.

The man behind the front desk brought out the registration forms and frowned. "You only checked in at noon, Ageta-san. Is anything wrong with the accommodations?"

"No," Ageta replied calmly. "This is an excellent ryokan, but I am not feeling well and wish to return to my home." He put the lone piece of luggage down and removed a wallet from his jacket. "How much is my bill?"

"One minute, please, sir. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions first? About the nature of your business and your home address?" He brought out his identification. "This is only routine; it shouldn't take long."

Police! Ageta stepped back from the desk, mind racing, and knocked his unzipped bag over, spilling its contents.

No! The photographs of Inspector Ueki! The man was

looking down over the desk. Ageta ran.

"Police! Stop!"

His hand was at the door, pushing, when the world seemed to explode around him. Then Minoru Ageta was stretched out flat on his face, an immense numb weight seeming to nail him to the floor as light and sound dimmed.

Inspector Ueki was still alive at midnight, but not by much. Hanako Ueki would not leave the hospital, and it was arranged that she would stay in the room set aside for Ueki when—and if—he came out of intensive care. Masahige Goto, my chief clerk at the office, offered to remain also, and to call if there was any change.

Noriko and I went home; the twins might need us. Although Yumiko was a conscientious nanny, she was in her eighties, and it would not do to place her under undue stress.

Alone with me, Noriko finally surrendered to anxiety and cried. I comforted her the best I could. Inspector Ueki's jacket was still folded over a kitchen chair, and I put it in a closet, wondering if he would ever wear it again.

At the first bleak gray of dawn, I leaned my head back on the sofa and fell asleep with Noriko huddled against me. When I opened my eyes again,

she was tending to Kenji and Jotaro.

"I'll call the hospital," I said.

Noriko settled Kenji back in the crib next to his brother. "I just did, Sam, and he is worse. They are administering new antibiotics." She turned her face so I couldn't see it.

Make it, Toshihiko! Damn it, make it! I went to the crib and stared down at the sleeping faces.

Minoru Ageta came to strapped to a gurney, uniformed police on either side, another officer at the door. A nurse in white stepped into view.

"What is happening?" he called out, confused, his voice trembling.

She held a hypodermic up to the light and checked the level of its contents. "You are going to surgery, and this will help prepare you."

"No! Please, no!" He was hurt, he remembered. Shot! And they would let him die—they knew he was involved in Inspector Ueki's stabbing.

The nurse inserted the needle, sending a jet of thiopental sodium into Ageta's bloodstream.

No! The protest was stillborn in a rush of darkness.

"Is this the man the police brought in?" the anesthesiologist asked, adjusting the dials of his tanks.

"Yes," the nurse said, "this is the one."

"So." He started the flow of gases that would render even the deepest of muscles immobile. The surgeon nodded and held out his hand for a scalpel.

The once-elaborate tomb, now crumbling and overgrown with weeds, was that of a great lord, a former ruler of Okayama and its environs. It was built on the summit of a hill rising above an *o-tera*, and, from across the temple gardens, Noriko and I could hear priests chanting in an ages-old monotone.

I had wanted to prepare Noriko, to help her meet the inevitable, but I was discovering it was unnecessary. She was already imbued with some inner faith as unshakable as it was unreasonable. There was no remnant of her earlier outpouring of grief.

"Sam," she had said, "there is a place we must go to now."

"But, what if...?"

"It will be all right, Sam. Please. I feel that we should go."

"Where, Noriko?"

"It is a temple," she answered, "not far from here."

She would offer prayers, I thought. We left the boys in Yumiko's charge. Now, seated on the cracked steps of the cut-stone platform, Noriko took me

away from the ordeal of the present to part of her family past. Her voice, as she told me the story, was clear and unflinching.

Zushino sat by the rude hut behind the barracks, using a twig to remove the earth from the roots of the miniature pine tree. The taproot, he saw, was ready for cutting, and this he accomplished with a pruning knife honed to a fine edge.

As he repotted the bonsai in its holder of oak staves, the soldiers were beginning to return from their evening patrol, their horses pounding across the wood bridge spanning the moat. Soon the men would call out for him to care for their mounts, to light the fire for the bath, and to bring food and sake from the kitchen.

First, however, he wanted to complete this task; most of the branches were doing well, bending and twisting at angles determined by the lengths of cloth and cord used to bind them. Zushino took the plant and walked around the barracks to the garden at the rear of the castle. He set it down beside a wisteria trellis, stepped back, and fairly hummed with satisfaction. The bonsai was a growing treasure, and his lord, the daimyo of the province, would surely find pleasure in it

when he next visited this part of the castle grounds.

Zushino was an intelligent, well-formed youth of fifteen, with fantasies that sometimes soared above the everyday world, but he never hoped to meet the daimyo personally, or to be singled out for favorable attention. He could serve from a distance, though, grateful and loyal because the daimyo was the man to whom he owed food, shelter, and the comfort of the hearth.

Zushino leaned against the trunk of a plum tree. There had, for instance, been the time of the frightful typhoon two years past, when the endless rains loosened the earth of the hillsides, sending down an oozing black death that crushed and smothered half his village.

The gods were with him that day, he believed; his parents had died, but he was pulled from the muck by his father's older brother and nursed back to health by his aunt. The times, however, were uncertain and difficult, and there was little rice to spare in their home.

Again good fortune came his way: his uncle, who had once served with distinction as a foot soldier, persuaded the captain of the daimyo's castle garrison to find work for Zushino. Captain Uchida found the boy reliable, capable of learning and performing new tasks with a

minimum of supervision. After two years of service for the garrison, Zushino, at his own request, was allowed to spend whatever time he could spare working in the garden.

"You could train to be a soldier," the captain sometimes suggested.

Zushino would stand with head bowed. "If I am needed, I will be a soldier."

Uchida had not pressed the point. It was a fact that the garden, under Zushino's talented instincts for care and landscaping, was becoming a favorite retreat for the daimyo.

Now, however, the captain was calling out in a gruff voice. "Ho, boy, stop your daydreaming and get a move on! Do we have to come beat you for our supper?"

The command brought a smile. Taking meals with Captain Uchida and his men was a privilege, a chance to hear of brave deeds, of weapons and horses, of famous battles and the men who fought in them. Zushino ran to the well to wash his hands and feet.

This night there was new and solemn talk about increasing brigandage in the countryside and, to Zushino's alarm, about a war that might come to the daimyo. "Who," Zushino said, "would war against our lord?"

"Great rulers," replied Uchida,

"always have enemies. It is the nature of man, and that is why we have armies."

"The castle," Zushino said, his bowl of rice and pickles forgotten, "is it secure?"

Uchida filled his cup with hot wine. "Yes, boy, but soon we begin to strengthen the ramparts."

"There is much I do not understand," Zushino said.

The captain clapped him on the back fondly. "Then listen while I drink my sake. It is time you knew the ways of the world."

Later, returning to his own quarters, a paper lantern casting dancing shadows about him, Zushino resolved to be alert in the morning, when Uchida would undertake his training.

It is the proper thing, he reflected as he unrolled his bedding, for everyone to be prepared to defend daimyo and castle. His pangs of regret lingered nevertheless; he would rather work in the garden than learn how to injure or kill.

He extinguished the lantern. Why could the world not be simpler? Hardships enough were present without human conflict. In his sleep, he saw his parents trudging home after a day spent in the flooded rice paddies, bent over hours on end as they transplanted the life-sustaining green shoots.

"You are doing well." Cap-

tain Uchida sat on a rock outside the barracks, watching with approval as Zushino wielded the heavy sword, holding off the attack of two soldiers with apparent ease.

Zushino jumped backward, then bowed to his opponents. "If it pleases you, Captain Uchida, I would like permission to spend some time in the garden."

"No," Uchida said, getting up. "You have made excellent progress during the past few weeks, and today, for your education, I want you to ride with us to Mist Mountain Pass for inspection."

By noon the air was still cool, and Zushino's years among people attuned to the seasons told him frost would cover the valley lands before the next full moon. At the pass, soldiers guarded a post station on the major highway entering from the next province. Here, travelers were stopped and checked, and toll fees collected. But, the guards said, there were also suspicious activities in the hills now—campfires at night, with no one in sight when patrols went out.

"What does it mean?" Zushino asked.

"Lord Fukimura is preparing to invade," Captain Uchida said, "sending spies to check our defenses. Soon, I think, we will truly earn our rice."

On the return journey, Captain Uchida stopped at each of the villages and small towns along the tree-lined highway, gathering information to take back to the daimyo. None of it, Zushino thought, was encouraging. Bandits from the northern mountains were growing bolder daily, and few places lacked reports of kidnappings, murders, and plundering.

Zushino felt a strong bond of kinship with the peasants who worked the land.

"Is there no way to stop this?" he asked.

"No," Uchida said sourly. "Who among these simple people knows how to fight effectively? They are helpless, and it is impossible for the soldiers of the daimyo to be everywhere at once."

"This is not as it should be," Zushino said.

"Find a solution, boy, and the daimyo will make you a noble."

Zushino blushed fiercely. "I did not mean to be rude."

As they neared the castle, they passed laborers carrying baskets of dirt and stones for the growing ramparts. How much better, Zushino reflected, if they did not have to leave their crops and animals for such work.

He walked through the garden quickly after the horses were cared for, shaking his head in dismay at the many signs of

neglect. In the morning, before anyone else was up, he would do what he could.

The night of the following day, as the soldiers cleaned and oiled their armor and weapons, Zushino wrapped some rice balls in a cloth, took his long sword down from its wall peg, and, his sandals tucked away in his robes, left the hut. Even in the dark, each step of the way through the garden was familiar to him, and he reached the rear wall of the castle without giving himself away.

From behind a hedge of tea plants, Zushino took a coil of hemp rope he had placed there earlier and fastened one end around a pillar-shaped boulder. Then, coil in hand, he climbed the boulder and leapt to the top of the wall. The cliff sloping down to the edge of the moat was not steep, and numerous outcroppings permitted him to lower himself easily.

There was no way to remove the rope, so Zushino left it in place, imagining with considerable trepidation Captain Uchida's ire when the warrior learned that he was defying orders, going out to scout the campfires they had seen again that night. Zushino had asked, first, to be allowed this mission, but the daimyo's officer had refused him forcefully. "Spies are dangerous men, Zushino, and

they would not hesitate to kill you!"

"Why can't our troops capture them?"

Uchida glared. "Because, boy, during the day they melt into the trees, and the only way to approach them at night would require torches and lanterns. They would be gone before we were near, and, at any rate, we know what they are doing."

Zushino had drawn a deep breath and repeated his earlier observation. "Captain, today I showed you how simple it would be for enemies to scale the back wall and attack through the garden. Do you still think I am being foolish?"

The soldier pulled at his mustache and laughed condescendingly. "Before Fukimura's army could begin hostilities, we would be ready. When it comes, it will be a frontal assault because of the terrain, and we will have adequate warning."

Speculation was futile, Zushino decided. Despite Uchida's objections, it was his duty to see what could be learned from enemy intentions. He borrowed brush and paper from one of the soldiers and left a letter for Uchida, begging forgiveness for his disobedience.

It was too late to worry about his decision now. Zushino followed the bank of the moat until he reached the bridge, clambered up the supports, and

disappeared into the night, unseen and unheard by the sentries on the ramparts.

At a crossroad, Zushino sat down under a cryptomeria tree. As the mists over the fields shifted under the warming air of dawn, he unfolded his carrying cloth and ate two of the rice balls. He was tired and disappointed after a futile search for the people by the campfires; he had reached one of the sites shortly before the roosters in the villages below began crowing, but it was deserted. Where did these spies go, in the light of day? In which direction should he look now?

He pulled the cords of his sandals tight and stood up, brushing burrs and dust from his clothing. If he were a spy on an extended mission, there were things he would need. And, Zushino reasoned, to obtain food and drink, he might have to stop at one of the cities, perhaps at a *hatago*. The inns for travelers, found only in the larger towns, would be an ideal place to ask questions or to eavesdrop on those discussing provincial affairs.

Another question came to him as he set out at a brisk pace along the road. Why would a spy risk a fire in the hills at night if he could simply ask questions at an inn, or merely walk by the castle during day-

light? There was so much he did not know! Zushino looked at the next milestone. He should be in the city before noon.

The bride, a lovely woman with teeth blackened for the occasion, stepped daintily into the palanquin. Zushino stood marveling at the sight of the rich garments worn by members of the wedding party. He was turning to ask who she was when he heard shouts of alarm.

Five men on horseback, roughly dressed and brandishing swords, swept down the street, scattering onlookers and descending on the two men preparing to shoulder the litter. One of the riders dismounted and grabbed the bride's wrists; she screamed repeatedly.

Zushino unsheathed his own sword and ran forward. "Let her go!"

The four men still on horseback wheeled around and looked at him in amazement before one of them, apparently the leader, leaned back in his saddle laughing. "Some puppy with a sword thinks to fight us!" He laughed again and whipped his sword down in a hissing arc. Zushino ducked to one side, catching the horseman across the abdomen with his own blade, then charged the man by the litter, wiping away the frozen smile of contempt with another slash.

The other horsemen whirled about and fled, leaving their fallen companions.

"Who are you, young man?"

The person coming toward him was dressed as a samurai and wore two swords, one long and one short.

"I am called Zushino, sir, and I work as a gardener at the daimyo's castle." Awkwardly he returned the sword to its scabbard.

"I see," the man said, smiling. "May I ask how a gardener happens to be so proficient with the sword?"

Zushino hated the redness of countenance he could not control. "I was taught by Captain Uchida of the Castle Guard."

The samurai bowed, bringing another curtain of red across Zushino's face. "I know the captain well, and he will hear of this. You have saved Otsu, my bride, from being taken for ransom. What may I do to reward you personally?"

Reward? Zushino's thoughts tumbled about chaotically. Money was something alien to him, down to the smallest of coins; all his needs were taken care of at the castle.

"It would be enough," he said with forced daring, "if you could tell me how to find the men sent to spy on the daimyo."

The samurai waited until his bride was placed safely in another palanquin and injured

bearers were tended to. Then he insisted that Zushino sit with him outside a tea house.

"You will not stop until you have found them, will you?" The samurai spoke with respect after Zushino explained how he came to be in the city. "And I don't suppose you will take anyone's word that the spies will leave once they have seen the castle defenses for themselves?"

"When the daimyo knows what interests them so much," Zushino said humbly, "he will be able to . . . to . . ."

"Go on," the samurai said. "I am interested in what you are saying."

"To know an enemy's intentions would seem to be half the battle," the youth blurted out. "Or, so I think."

"Then go to the villagers, Zushino, and tell them of your concerns. They see more and know more of their surroundings than city people."

As Zushino walked away, the samurai hurried to his feet. Once he saw Otsu to their new home, he would take a fast horse and catch up with Zushino. After all, he was now in the service of the same daimyo, and it would be wrong to let someone of such courage and promise come to ill. It was not, he thought, the usual way of beginning a marriage, but Otsu knew more than most what was required of someone who fol-

lowed the Way of the Sword.

Crouched behind the trunk of a pine tree, Zushino strained to hear what the four men seated by the fire were saying. That he was near them at all was fortuitous; the first peasant he'd met in the countryside adjoining the castle, a squat man wearing knickers, leggings, and a wide-brimmed straw hat, said that, yes, he knew of men skulking about the hills at night, within sight of the castle. And if the young man with the sword thought he could get rid of such types, might the gods be with him! Those men out there, he said, sneaked about the wells at night, and a pig and some chickens were missing.

The peasant indicated a barely-noticeable trail leading off from the main road. "Up there," he said, "beyond the grove of persimmon trees, the path will take you to a clearing where the woodcutters worked last winter. You will find the men there."

With darkness fast approaching, Zushino was forced to move up the trail cautiously, not knowing precisely where the spies were, taking his sandals off to step more lightly over twigs and leaves.

Now, in a shower of pine needles sent flying by sharp gusts of cold wind, his frustration mounted as the four men,

drinking sake from a jar warming by the fire, discussed the scrolls they had taken from bamboo tubes. There was no other choice: he must crawl closer, conceal himself by a fallen tree lying just outside the rim of light in the clearing. The contents of the papers seemed important. He couldn't risk having the men make their way back to Lord Fukimura's territory while he was returning to the castle for help.

In the rising wind, a bough broke from the pine and caught Zushino on the shoulders. Involuntarily, he cried out in pain—and then grabbed for his sword. But it was too late. The four men were on him, and the point of a sword bit deeply into his side before his arms were pinned and his weapon tossed aside.

The samurai glided silently across the ridge above the campfire, a shadow briefly blotting out the pinpoints of starlight. He thought nothing, sensed everything, aware of rises and dips, of tangled roots obscured by damp mounds of molding leaves, of a cricket singing its last slow song as it yielded to the cold.

In the clearing not far below, by the unsteady light of the wind-whipped fire, he saw a figure being forced to kneel while another slowly raised both arms.

A steel blade flashed yellow and orange. The samurai, in one unbroken motion, freed his short sword, poised on a ledge, and threw it with all his strength. Then, long sword out, he leapt.

With hoarse shouts, the three surviving spies charged as one. Zushino, lying on his side, watched them crumple one after another, falling in a common heap. His regret, as he swam toward a blackness deeper than night, was that he could not thank the nameless samurai now binding his wound with a sash.

"Wake up, boy! Would you sleep forever?"

Zushino's eyelids felt as if they were covered with grit. He was lying on a straw pallet at one end of the barracks, Captain Uchida standing over him. "Captain!" His mouth and throat were parched. "I am still alive!"

The soldier took a seat by the pallet. "For three days, we were uncertain whether you would return to us, Zushino, but the fever broke this morning."

Zushino touched the thick pad of swathing at his side. "They would have beheaded me if that samurai . . ." He stared at the captain. "Who is he? Never did I think to see a sword used like that!"

Captain Uchida carefully raised the youth to a sitting po-

sition and held out a bowl of broth. "Drink this, lad, and then you will meet our friend and thank him for bringing you back."

"What was written on the scrolls I saw?"

"Eat," Uchida said, "and I will tell you."

The spies, said the captain, were sent by Lord Fukimura to determine the numbers and placement of night sentries at the daimyo's castle. During a period of several weeks, they made their estimates on the basis of the torches they could count. On the scrolls, they marked out the best route for an attack under cover of night.

Zushino ate some of the broth and lay back, feeling stronger. "Please, Captain Uchida, from which direction did they plan to come?"

Uchida smiled grimly. "As you feared, Zushino. From the back wall, through the garden. A few men could have made the moat crossing undetected, as you did, scaled the cliff, and used ropes with hooks to get over the rear wall. If they had got into the barracks while most of us were sleeping . . ." His voice trailed off as he contemplated the calamity averted by this young man's dedication.

"You are not angry because I went out against your orders?"

Uchida scowled. "Yes, I am

angry—with myself for not seeing the obvious." There was much more to be said, but Zushino was sleeping. Uchida smoothed the quilt and left.

"What did you feel," the samurai said, after answering some of Zushino's preliminary questions, "when you killed the two men who sought to kidnap Otsu?"

Zushino was fascinated by the man's features. The samurai was no longer young, and his skin was permanently tanned and roughened by years of exposure to the elements. He recalled that Otsu also was older than most brides, although still extraordinarily beautiful. "I felt nothing, sir," he said truthfully, "until it was over, and then I was saddened."

The samurai gazed at the youth thoughtfully. "Would you do it again if it were necessary?"

Zushino moved his head so he could see through the entrance-way to the garden beyond. The dwarfed pine was a healthy green; someone must be watering it. "I would do it again, sir, to protect people, but I would never enjoy it."

"I am pleased," the samurai said simply.

"Sir—" Zushino summoned up his courage—"I owe you my life and would like to know your name so I may thank you."

The samurai smiled. "I am known as Musashi Miyamoto."

Zushino closed his eyes tightly, thunderstruck. Musashi! How many times, he wondered, had Captain Uchida and his men recounted the adventures of the simple country boy who, after fighting in the great Battle of Sekigahara, went on to perfect his deadly method of two-sword fighting, disdaining praise or recognition as much as he did superior numbers in a mortal fray?

When Zushino looked at the man again, he saw a smiling face, not the arrogant countenance worn by so many samurai.

"I am not worthy to be in your presence, sir, but I will never forget what you did for me."

"There is no debt. You kept Otsu from danger, and by confronting the spies, you may have saved the man I now serve, my old friend who is lord of this castle. Now, put your arms around my shoulders."

Zushino was being lifted from the pallet. "Where are you taking me?"

"To your destiny, Zushino."

Captain Uchida and the samurai struggled to hold Zushino as he attempted to make obeisance to the daimyo, on hands and knees, forehead pressed to the floor.

"Enough!" the master of the

province laughed. "Sit still, and do not harm yourself."

The daimyo, in robes of gold and crimson, patted the cushions by the lacquered table. "Come, Musashi and Captain Uchida, let us hurry. We must not over-exert this courageous fellow." The two men took places next to him.

"Until today, you have been known as Zushino, the garden boy," the daimyo continued, "but that is no longer fitting. You were brought to the castle as an impoverished, orphaned farm boy, and, under Captain Uchida's guidance, you flourished. You have become, through your own initiative, the rarest of any ruler's garden plants, a person whose loyalty and devotion put all self-interest aside. Therefore, from this day on, you shall take the word for a garden plant as a family name to pass on to your children and theirs for all time."

"*Ueki*?" Zushino said incredulously.

"Zushino Ueki," the daimyo confirmed, then held up his hand as Zushino opened his mouth to speak. "Furthermore, because of the interest you have expressed in our people, I am turning you over to Musashi for training. The time has come for someone to lead the people of our villages and towns in learning to defend themselves against pillagers from without and

criminal elements in their own midst. Will you do this, Zushino Ueki? It is a task that will not be completed in your lifetime, and hard years of preparation lie before you."

Zushino looked from one man to the other, thinking of the kidnappers, of the widespread stories of murder and theft in the province, and of the peasant who helped him find the spies. And, in that instant, he realized what Musashi meant by "destiny."

What else could explain his rescue at the hillside clearing? It was not blind luck, he thought, that led Musashi to the home of the same peasant who directed him to a roadside trail likely to be missed by anyone unfamiliar with it. Nor could it have been coincidence that Musashi located him on foot in unknown territory, triumphing against both darkness and superior numbers.

He accepted his destiny, and found that acceptance was a soothing balm, easing the pain and stiffness in his side. "I will give the rest of my life doing as you ask. And..." He pushed himself erect, swaying slightly with the effort.

"Yes?" There was concern in the daimyo's eyes.

"... I wish to return to the barracks now, without help, if you will excuse me."

"Go, then, on your own two

feet," the daimyo said.

For long minutes after Zushino Ueki's departure, the daimyo, Musashi, and Captain Uchida sat in silence, each wondering, in his own way, if it were not a thankless burden instead of a reward they had bestowed on Zushino.

Noriko was behind me, gently kneading my shoulder muscles with her fingers. "Thank you for listening to my story, Sam. It helped me to tell it."

I got up, turned around, and pulled her close, saying with a kiss what words couldn't express. "Zushino. I hope he had a long life, Noriko."

She took my hand. "Over here, Sam. What do you see?"

On the east steps to the tomb was a bonsai, what seemed to be a very old pine whose trunk and branches were gnarled and twisted. Its wood container, however, was of recent manufacture, and the meter-high tree was thriving. I stuck a finger through the bark mulch; the soil was still damp.

"But, who . . . ?"

"I think you can guess, Sam."

It wasn't difficult for me to look back, to see Zushino in his later years, placing a special mark of his affectionate loyalty, a *ueki*, on the ruler's final resting place, perhaps while his own sons watched at his side.

"Toshihiko never told me any of this," I said, blinking as I thought of the inspector coming out here alone to care for the garden plant, to keep the tradition and memory alive. Would it end now, with Inspector Ueki's death?

Noriko's empathy, often startling in its intensity, asserted itself again. "Father will live, Sam, just as Zushino did. Please do not doubt it for a single moment."

I worried anyway.

On the third day, Inspector Ueki was moved from intensive care to his private room.

A few days later when Noriko and I arrived at the hospital, we found him complaining to the nurse. The food was bad, someone had dared to take his cigarettes, no one would tell him anything. As we walked in, he demanded from us news of the latest progress of his grandsons, and would someone *please* tell him about his assailant—identity and motive?

In as few words as possible, I brought him up to date.

"Where is this Minoru Ageta now, Sam?"

"In another room down the hall, under guard. He's paralyzed from the waist down, but the doctors assure me he'll be in shape to be wheeled in for his trial. By the way," I said, grinning at Noriko, "I hear one of

your illustrious ancestors got a start in police work from a fellow named Musashi."

"So," the inspector gave Noriko an accusing glance, "my daughter has been boring you with family history."

"Boring! Everyone in Japan knows about the adventures of that famous samurai and wants to be like him. How come your family never told the historians what happened to Musashi when he vanished from the public records? I mean, he was right here in what's now Okayama Prefecture!"

Ueki put his forearm across his eyes. "My father, his father, and all the males going back to Zushino regarded it as private, not something to boast about or to have publicized. Anyway, it ends with me."

"How can you say that, Toshihiko? You're still going strong."

"Maybe," he said softly, "but I have no sons."

"Father," Noriko said, "when

your grandsons are old enough, they will go with you to the dai-myō's tomb and learn the meaning of the plant." She smiled. "I do not think it will wither from neglect."

The inspector sat up straight in his bed. "Did you agree to that, Sam? They are your sons, not mine. Why should it matter to them, or to you?"

The piercing whoop of nearby police sirens reached a crescendo outside, then receded slowly.

"It *has* to matter, Toshihiko—to all of us. I don't know what the boys will want to do in life, but if they decide to carry on a family tradition, Noriko and I will back them all the way."

"Sam?"

"Yeah?"

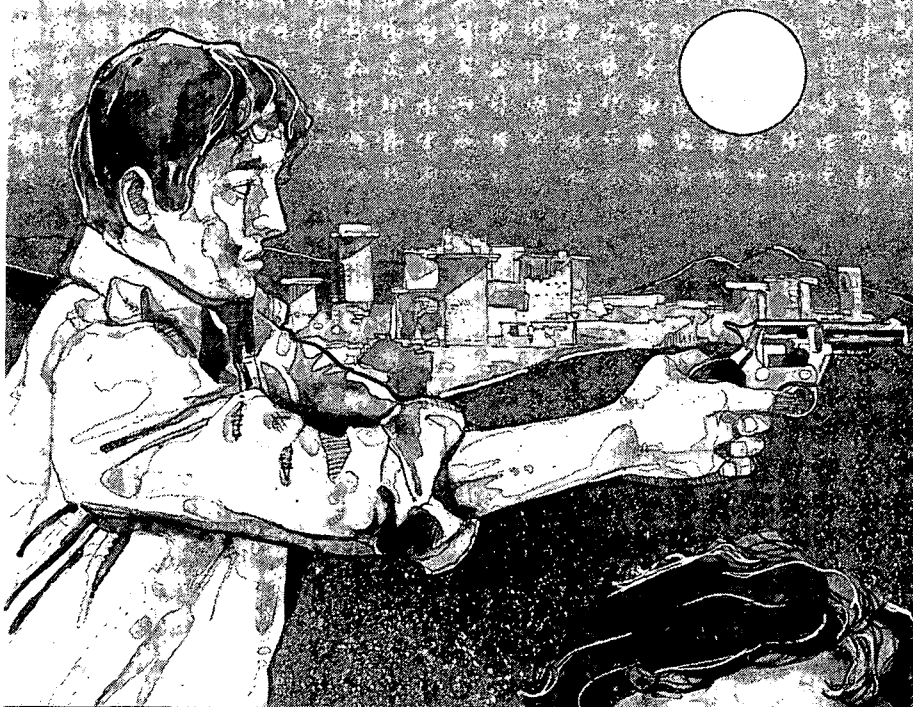
"The next time you come, bring me some cigarettes."

Police Inspector Toshihiko Ueki's face, as we closed the door to his room, was that of a contented man.

SOLUTION TO THE JUNE "UNSOLVED":

Brown was the average citizen, Jones the criminal, and Smith the judge. Brown was the guilty party.

FICTION



Siesta in Rosario

by Hal Ellson

Illustration by Arthur George



A faint wind stirred the jacarandas in the small plaza behind police headquarters. With his eyes half closed, Detective Victor Fiala watched them till they came to rest again. The best thing to do in this heat, he thought, and closed his eyes, but only briefly. Measured footsteps sounded on the walk, then his name was spoken and a heavy hand touched his shoulder. He opened his eyes and saw a policeman looking down at him. "Sorry to disturb you, Victor, but the chief's asking for you," he said.

"As usual," Fiala yawned. He got up, crossed the burning plaza and entered headquarters where the chief of police awaited him. "A hot day, Victor," Lopez said: "Sit down. We have a little problem. A call came through from Carlos Munoz at Rosario. The fool was probably drunk. I couldn't make out what he was saying, but he may be in trouble again."

"I doubt it," Fiala answered. "Most likely he fell out of his chair at that cantina where he hangs out."

"Perhaps, but you'd better look into the matter. Put him back in his chair if you have to, and tell him not to bother me again."

Lopez had spoken, and there

was no arguing with him. Fiala shrugged and went out the door. Another fool's errand, he thought, and in this heat. His car stood at the curb, gleaming in the sun. That morning he'd hosed it down and polished it to mirror-brightness, a wasted effort considering the trip before him. Shrugging, he climbed behind the wheel and drove out of the city, northward through a monotonous terrain of flat desert country. The road to Rosario was a good one, Rosario itself a tiny nondescript village, parched and dusty. No one was in the streets when he arrived there. The deserted plaza baked in the hot sun. It was ten past one. A long ride for nothing, he thought, but it didn't matter. Rosario was always pleasant and relaxing. A heavy bouquet of orange blossoms scented the air.

The bouquet was like a drug, the quietness deepened, and he looked around. The plaza remained stark empty, but that was hardly unusual during the siesta. The clocks ceased ticking here. *Ai*, what clocks? he thought, for no one owned one in this place where time didn't matter and nothing of event ever happened.

Belying the last, a gunshot broke the stillness, then, once more, silence engulfed the vil-

lage and it slept. Not a soul appeared. Strange, Fiala thought. The whole village seemed deserted, but he knew that couldn't be. Violence had erupted and everyone was in hiding. The sheriff's call for help proved that, but where was Munoz?

Uneasy, Fiala waited, and when the sheriff didn't appear, he drove halfway around the plaza and braked sharply at the sight that met his eye. A man lay face up on a bench. One arm lay across his chest, the other dangled, the hand turned palm out and dripping blood. Unblinking, the dead man stared up at the savage sun.

Turning away, Fiala drove off, rounded the plaza, and turned into a dusty, rutted street. Silent adobes lined it, and in that brief and desolate corridor between the plaza and desert, there was nothing to explain a gunshot, a dead man's presence in the plaza, or the whereabouts of Munoz. Nothing suggested danger, but he knew it might be lurking here and left the car. Once more he surveyed the street. With doors locked and windows barred, the adobes stood mute the length of it while at the far corner, two cantinas faced each other across the gutter.

He headed for them and entered the one on the right. A minute later he pushed through

the swinging doors, crossed the dusty gutter, and entered the second cantina. The barroom was empty and silent. Puzzled, he called out to the proprietor, and a shadowed area beyond an arch echoed his voice. He walked to the archway and stepped into a low-ceilinged room. Benches lined the wall in the back, chairs and an overturned table occupied the center. Again he called out, and a voice from the barroom answered: "I am here. Welcome, señor."

The speaker sounded amused, but Fiala wasn't. He stepped into the barroom. A young man with a vacant smile on his face confronted him, bowed, and said, "Were you looking for me? Is everything all right, Juanito?"

Fiala ignored the questions and gave his name. "Good enough. Mine's Santana," the young fellow said. "You're not from Rosario?"

"No, and yourself?"

"I was born here, but I've been working in the States."

On a prison road gang probably, Fiala thought, and Santana laughed. "You're wondering about me, I'm sure."

"Not at all."

"There's no need to lie. You're also wondering why it's so quiet in the village."

"Rosario is always quiet."

"But not like this. One would think everyone is dead. There's

not a soul to be seen."

"That's not unusual during the siesta."

"All right. We won't pursue that. You came here in a car, señor?"

"I did."

"Well, this time it's the truth, and I suppose you stopped in the plaza. Now what did you see there?"

"No one but a drunk lying on a bench."

"A drunk? So that's what you thought of him. Now tell me why you left your car at the plaza? Did you run out of gas?"

"No, I've been driving a long way and felt like stretching my legs."

"And you wanted a drink, so you came here."

"That's correct."

"Is it?" Santana shook his head. "That's not correct. Both of us know that. But wait. You heard a shot? Don't answer, señor. I know what you'll say. You'll say you heard nothing."

A madman was talking, and he'd gunned down the man on the plaza bench. But what of the missing barman? Fiala wondered, and Santana grinned at him.

"You're thinking," he said, "perhaps wondering where the barman is. Are you his friend?"

"We know each other."

"I see. Now tell me something. When a man is thirsty,

he must drink, is that right?"

"It follows."

"Yes, but if a thirsty man drinks and doesn't pay, what happens?"

It was coming clear now. A dispute over the cost of a drink accounted for the absence of the barman. Had Santana killed him? Fiala eyed him warily. No sound came from outside, the whole village was silent. Faintly, the bouquet of orange blossoms scenting the plaza drifted to him, reminding him of the dead man on the bench.

"Señor, you haven't answered me," Santana said. "Perhaps you didn't hear the question. Well, no matter. Listen to this. Why should a man be angry if I take his money?"

"I have no opinion on that," Fiala answered.

"Then you're dead," Santana laughed. "Speaking of the dead, isn't that why you're here?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't play games with me. You're wondering what happened to the barman. You heard a shot and that's what brought you in here." Santana reached inside his shirt and drew out a pistol. "You heard this go off." He pointed the weapon at Fiala. "Now tell me who sent for you?"

"No one sent for me. I was just passing through the village on my way home."

"Of course, and you stopped

for a drink because you were thirsty. Are you still thirsty?"

"I could stand a drink."

"Of course, but, first, your gun. Put it on the bar. That's it." Santana picked it up and grinned. "There's no barman to serve you. What could have happened to him? But you were in the back room. Didn't you look behind the overturned table, or did I interrupt you when I came in? Better go back and look. The barman's there."

"I'll take your word on that."

"Don't take my word. See for yourself." Santana motioned with the pistol, and Fiala had no choice. He entered the back room and found the barman sprawled behind the overturned table, with a bullet in his head.

"Now you know what happened," Santana said when Fiala stepped back into the barroom. "That fellow was a fool. All he had to do was give me a free drink, but he refused—so I shot him."

"And the man in the plaza?"

"Another fool."

"What did he do to you?"

"He looked at me, señor, and I didn't like what I saw in his eyes. So . . ."

"And Munoz?"

"You should know. The fat pig called you here."

"You're mistaken. I came on my own."

"From Montes. Isn't that correct?"

"From Montes."

"Yes, where there are many police who walk like they're the lords of the earth and deal hard with those who come into their hands, like I did. They beat me, señor. They almost killed me, as you should know. Or have you forgotten what happened?"

"I'm afraid I don't know what you're referring to."

"So, you're still playing games. Well, let me remind you, Detective Fiala. Five years ago on the mountain road coming out of San Joaquin, you picked me up and turned me over to the police, even though you didn't find what you wanted to find. Do you remember now?"

"I have no memory of that."

"I'll further remind you then. You didn't find the marijuana, but the police did. They beat me till I told them where I had it, but it was you who handed me over to them, so it was you who sent me to the penitentiary."

Five years ago? Fiala remembered the incident at San Joaquin, but he couldn't place Santana. That didn't matter now. If, as Santana believed, he had handed him over to the police, he couldn't admit it. "You have me confused with someone else," he said. "I know nothing of San Joaquin except that it's in the mountains."

"And you were just passing through Rosario today. That's why you stopped here, or so you claim, but that's a lie. You were called. I forced Munoz to make that call."

"Then where is he now?"

"Dead, señor. I shot the fat pig for old times' sake."

Fiala forced a smile and said, "I'm afraid you've had too much to drink."

"You don't believe Munoz is dead?"

"I'll accept that if you show me his body."

"As you wish. He's in the cantina across the street."

"You're mistaken. I was there before I came in here and I saw no sign of him."

Santana laughed and pointed to the door. "Let's go. I'll show you the late sheriff of Rosario, if you can take the sight."

Shrugging, Fiala went out the door, and Santana followed him across the street and into the cantina. "Well, where's Munoz?" Fiala asked after surveying the barroom.

"Look behind the bar and you'll see your friend."

Fiala went to the bar, gazed over it, and calmly turned. "Well, where is he?" he asked.

"Look, don't joke with me. I'm not in the mood," Santana shouted.

"I'm not joking, so I suggest you take a look for yourself and then have a drink. I think you need one."

Santana went to the bar and looked over it, then turned to Fiala, too puzzled to speak. "Will you have that drink now?" Fiala said, smiling at him. Without waiting for an answer, he went behind the bar, picked up a bottle, filled two glasses, and as Santana reached for one, he lifted the bottle and smashed it over his head.

Santana went down like a felled log. With that, Fiala stepped from behind the bar and called, "It's all right, you can come out now."

A shuffling sound came from the back room and Munoz appeared at the arched doorway. With a bloodied kerchief round his head, he gazed at Santana as if at a deadly coral snake.

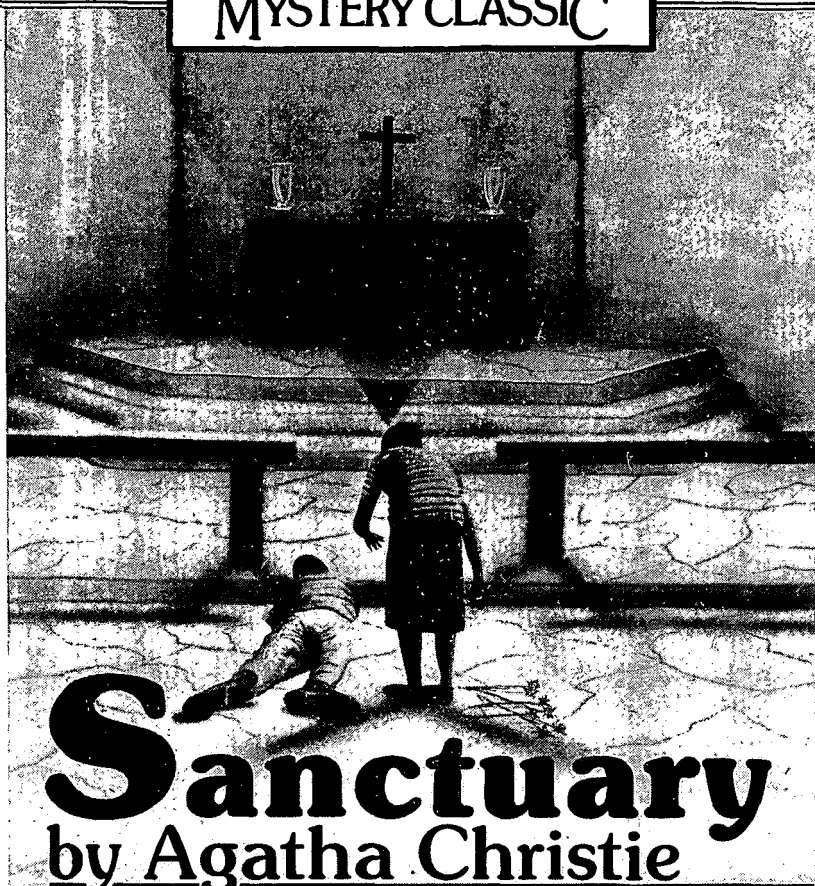
"He's out like a light," Fiala said. "How's your head feeling?"

"Pretty good, Victor. He only creased it." Munoz came to the bar then, kicked Santana and said, "I don't know why, but he was always a bad one."

Fiala stepped behind the bar and poured two drinks from a greasy bottle of mescal.

"And a bad shot, too," he answered.

MYSTERY CLASSIC



Sanctuary

by Agatha Christie

Illustration by E.T. Steadman

The vicar's wife came round the corner of the vicarage with her arms full of chrysanthemums. A good deal of rich garden soil was attached to her strong brogue shoes and a few fragments of earth were adhering to her nose, but of that latter fact she was perfectly unconscious.

She had a slight struggle opening the vicarage gate which hung, rustily, half off its hinges. Some of the chrysanthemums fell to the ground. Mrs. Harmon bent to retrieve them with an ejaculation

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which was not quite in keeping with vicarage standards. A puff of wind caught at her battered felt hat, causing it to sit even more rakishly than it had before. "Bother!" said Bunch, toning down her language.

Christened by her optimistic parents "Diana," Mrs. Harmon had become "Bunch" at an early age for somewhat obvious reasons, and the name had stuck to her ever since. Retrieving the chrysanthemums, she made her way through the lich-gate to the churchyard, and so into the church.

"Br-r-r-rh!" said Bunch. "I'd better get on with this quickly. I don't want to die of cold."

With the quickness born of practice she collected vases, water, flower holders. I wish we had lilies, she thought. I get so tired of these scraggy chrysanthemums.

Her nimble fingers arranged the blooms in their holders. There was nothing particularly original or artistic about the decorations, for Bunch Harmon herself was neither original nor artistic, but it was a homely and pleasant arrangement. Carrying the vases carefully, Bunch stepped up the aisle and made her way toward the altar.

As she did so, the sun came out. It shone through the east window of crude, colored glass, mostly blue and red—the gift of a wealthy Victorian churchgoer. The effect was almost startling in its sudden Oriental opulence. Like jewels, thought Bunch. Suddenly she stopped, staring ahead of her.

On the chancel steps was a huddled dark form.

Carefully putting down the flowers, Bunch went up to it and bent over it. Just for a moment she thought it might be an old coat or a bundle of clothes, but she now saw that her first impression had been correct.

It was a man lying there, huddled over on himself.

Bunch knelt down by him and slowly, carefully, turned him over. For a moment she had thought that he was dead, but she realized now that he was still alive. Her fingers went to his pulse—a pulse so feeble and fluttering that it told its own story, as did the almost greenish pallor of his face.

There was no doubt that the man was dying.

He was about forty-five, dressed in a dark shabby suit. She laid down the limp hand she had picked up and looked at his other hand. This was clenched like a fist on his breast, the fingers closed over what seemed to be a large wad or handkerchief. All round the

clenched hand there were splashes of a brown fluid which, Bunch guessed, was dry blood. She sat back on her heels, frowning, as she wondered in her usual slow, common-sense way what was the best thing to do.

Up till now the man's eyes had been closed, but at this point they suddenly opened and fixed themselves on Bunch's face. They were neither dazed nor wandering. They seemed fully alive and intelligent. His lips moved and Bunch bent forward to catch the words, or rather the word. It was only one word that he said. "Sanctuary."

There was, she thought, just a very faint smile as he breathed out this word. There was no mistaking it, for after a moment he said it again. "Sanctuary."

Then, with a faint sigh, he closed his eyes. Once more Bunch's fingers went to his pulse. It was fainter now and more intermittent. She got up with decision.

"Don't move," she said, "or try to move. I'm going for help."

The man's eyes opened again, but he seemed now to be fixing his attention on the colored light that came through the east window. He murmured something that Bunch could not quite catch. She thought, startled, that it might have been her husband's name.

"Julian?" she said. "Did you come here to find Julian?"

But there was no answer. The man lay with eyes closed, his breathing coming in slow, shallow fashion.

Bunch turned and left the church rapidly. She glanced at her watch and nodded with some satisfaction. Dr. Griffiths would still be in his surgery. It was only a couple of minutes' walk from the church. She went in, without waiting to knock or ring, passing through the waiting room and into the doctor's surgery.

"You must come at once," said Bunch breathlessly. "There's a man dying in the church."

Some minutes later, Dr. Griffiths rose from his knees after a brief examination.

"Can we move him from here into the vicarage? I can attend to him better there—not that it's any use."

"Of course," said Bunch. "I'll go and get things ready. I'll get Harper and Jones, shall I? To help you carry him."

"Thanks. I can telephone from the vicarage for an ambulance, but I'm afraid—by the time it comes . . ."

Bunch said, "Internal bleeding?"

Dr. Griffiths nodded. "How on earth did he come here?"

It was about five minutes later when Dr. Griffiths put down the

telephone receiver and came back into the morning room where the injured man was lying on quickly arranged blankets on the sofa. Bunch was moving a basin of water and clearing up after the doctor's examination.

"Well, that's that," said Griffiths. "I've sent for an ambulance and I've notified the police." He stood, frowning down on the patient who lay with closed eyes. His left hand was plucking in a nervous, spasmodic way at his side.

"He was shot," said Griffiths. "Shot at fairly close quarters. He rolled up his handkerchief into a ball and plugged the wound with it to stop the bleeding."

"Could he have gone far after that happened?" Bunch asked.

"Oh, yes, it's quite possible. A mortally wounded man has been known to pick himself up and walk along a street as though nothing had happened, and then suddenly collapse five or ten minutes later. So he needn't have been shot in the church. Oh, no. He may have been shot some distance away. Of course, he may have shot himself and then dropped the revolver and staggered blindly towards the church. I don't quite know why he made for the church and not for the vicarage."

"Oh, I know that," said Bunch. "He said, 'Sanctuary.'"

The doctor stared. "Sanctuary?"

"Here's Julian," said Bunch, turning her head as she heard her husband's steps in the hall.

The Reverend Julian Harmon entered the room. His vague, scholarly manner always made him appear much older than he was.

"Dear me!" said Julian Harmon, gazing in a mild, puzzled manner at the surgical appliances and the figure on the sofa.

Bunch explained with her usual economy of words. "Do you know him, Julian? I thought he said your name."

The vicar looked down at the dying man. "Poor fellow," he said, and shook his head. "No, I don't know him. I'm almost sure I've never seen him before."

At that moment the dying man's eyes opened once more. They went from the doctor to Julian Harmon, and from him to his wife. The eyes stayed there, staring into Bunch's face.

Dr. Griffiths stepped forward. "If you could tell us," he said urgently.

But with his eyes fixed on Bunch, the man said in a weak voice, "Please—please—"

And then, with a slight tremor, he died.

Sergeant Hayes licked his pencil and turned the page of his notebook. "So that's all you can tell me, Mrs. Harmon?"

"That's all," said Bunch. "These are the things out of his coat pockets."

On a table at Sergeant Hayes's elbow were a wallet, a rather battered old watch with the initials W.S., and the return half of a ticket to London.

"You've found out who he is?" asked Bunch.

"A Mr. and Mrs. Eccles phoned up the police station. He's her brother, it seems. Name of Sandbourn. Been in a low state of health and nerves for some time. Depression. Recently come back from abroad, I understand. He's been getting worse lately. The day before yesterday he walked out and didn't come back. He took a revolver with him."

"And he came out here and shot himself?" said Bunch. "Why?"

"Well, you see, he'd been depressed—"

Bunch interrupted him. "I don't mean that. I mean, why here?"

Since Sergeant Hayes obviously did not know the answer to that one, he replied in an oblique fashion. "Come out here, he did, on the bus."

"Yes," said Bunch again. "But why?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Harmon," said Sergeant Hayes. "There's no accounting. If the balance of the mind is disturbed . . ."

Bunch finished for him. "They may do it anywhere. But it still seems to me unnecessary to take a bus to a small country place like this. He didn't know anyone here, did he?"

"Not so far as can be ascertained," said Sergeant Hayes. He coughed in an apologetic manner and said, as he rose to his feet, "It may be as Mr. and Mrs. Eccles will come out and see you, ma'am—if you don't mind, that is."

"Of course I don't mind," said Bunch. "I wish I had something to tell them."

"I'll be getting along," said Sergeant Hayes.

"I'm only so thankful," said Bunch, going with him to the front door, "that it wasn't murder."

A car was drawing up at the vicarage gate.

Sergeant Hayes, glancing at it, remarked, "Looks as though that's Mr. and Mrs. Eccles come here now."

Bunch braced herself to endure what, she felt, might be an ordeal. Anyway, she thought, I can always call Julian in to help me.

Exactly what she had expected Mr. and Mrs. Eccles to be like, Bunch could not have said; but she was conscious, as she greeted

them, of a feeling of surprise.

Mr. Eccles was a stout, florid man whose natural manner would have been cheerful.

Mrs. Eccles had a vaguely flashy look about her. She had a small, mean, pursed-up mouth. Her voice was thin and reedy. "It's been a terrible shock, Mrs. Harmon, as you can imagine," she said.

"Oh, I know," said Bunch. "It must have been. Do sit down. Can I offer you—well, perhaps it's a little early for tea—"

Mr. Eccles waved a podgy hand, "No, no, nothing for us," he said. "It's very kind of you, I'm sure. Just wanted to—well—what poor William said and all that, you know."

"He'd been abroad a long time," said Mrs. Eccles, "and I think he must have had some nasty experiences. Very quiet and depressed he's been, ever since he came home. Said the world wasn't fit to live in and there was nothing to look forward to. Poor Bill, he was always moody."

Bunch stared at them both for a moment without speaking.

"Pinched my husband's revolver, he did," went on Mrs. Eccles. "Without our knowing. Then it seems he come out here by bus. I suppose that was nice feeling on his part. He wouldn't have liked to do it in our house."

"Poor fellow," said Mr. Eccles, with a sigh. "It doesn't do to judge."

There was another short pause, and Mr. Eccles said, "Did he leave a message? Any last words, or anything like that?"

His bright, rather piglike eyes watched Bunch closely. Mrs. Eccles, too, leaned forward as though anxious for the reply.

"No," said Bunch quietly. "He came into the church when he was dying, for sanctuary."

Mrs. Eccles said in a puzzled voice, "Sanctuary? I don't quite . . ."

Mr. Eccles interrupted impatiently. "Holy place, my dear. That's what the vicar's wife means. It's a sin—suicide, you know. I expect he wanted to make amends."

"He tried to say something just before he died," said Bunch. "He began, 'Please,' but that's as far as he got."

Mrs. Eccles put her handkerchief to her eyes and sniffed. "Oh, dear," she said. "It's terribly upsetting, isn't it?"

"There, there, Pam," said her husband. "Don't take on. These things can't be helped. Poor Willie. Still, he's at peace now. Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Harmon. I hope we haven't interrupted you."

They shook hands with her. Then Eccles turned back suddenly to say, "Oh, yes, there's just one other thing. I think you've got his

coat here, haven't you?"

"His coat?" Bunch frowned.

Mrs. Eccles said, "We'd like to have his things. Sentimental-like."

"He had a watch and a wallet and a railway ticket in the pockets," said Bunch. "I gave them to Sergeant Hayes."

"That's all right, then," said Mr. Eccles. "He'll hand them over to us, I expect. His private papers would be in the wallet."

"There was a pound note in the wallet," said Bunch. "Nothing else."

"No letters? Nothing like that?"

Bunch shook her head.

"Well, thank you again, Mrs. Harmon. The coat he was wearing—is that at the station? Perhaps the sergeant's got that, too, has he?"

Bunch frowned in an effort of remembrance. "No," she said. "I don't think . . . let me see. The doctor took his coat off to examine his wound." She looked round the room vaguely. "I must have taken it upstairs with the towels and basin."

"I wonder now, Mrs. Harmon, if you don't mind . . . We'd like his coat, you know, the last thing he wore. The wife feels rather sentimental about it."

"Of course," said Bunch. "Would you like me to have it cleaned first? I'm afraid it's rather—well—stained."

"Oh, no, that doesn't matter."

"I wonder where . . . Excuse me a moment."

Bunch went upstairs, and it was a few minutes before she returned. "I'm sorry," she said breathlessly, "my daily woman must have put it aside with other clothes that were going to the cleaners. It's taken me quite a long time to find it. Here it is. I'll do it up for you in brown paper."

Disclaiming their protests, she did so, then once more effusively bidding her farewell, they departed.

Bunch went slowly back across the hall and entered the study. The Reverend Julian Harmon looked up and his brow cleared. He was writing a sermon and was fearing that he'd been led astray by the interest of the political relations between Judæa and Persia, in the reign of Cyrus.

"Yes, dear?" he said hopefully.

"Julian," said Bunch, "what's sanctuary exactly?"

Julian Harmon gratefully put aside his sermon paper. "Well," he said, "sanctuary in Roman and Greek temples applied to the

cella in which stood the statue of the god. The Latin word for altar, *ara*, also means protection. In A.D. 399 the right of sanctuary in Christian churches was finally and definitively recognized. Criminals and refugees have taken advantage of the right of sanctuary since very early times. In the Bible, you may remember, Joab is mentioned as laying hold of the altar. The earliest mention of the right of sanctuary in England is in A.D. 600, in the code of laws issued by Ethelbert—"

He was, as often, disconcerted by his wife's reception of his erudite pronouncements. "Darling," she said. "You are sweet."

Bending over, she kissed him on the tip of his nose.

"The Eccleses have been here," said Bunch.

The vicar frowned. "The Eccleses? I don't seem to remember . . ."

"You couldn't remember," said Bunch. "They're the sister and brother-in-law of the man in the church."

"My dear, you ought to have called me."

"It wasn't necessary," said Bunch. "They were not in need of consolation. I wonder now." She frowned. "If I put a casserole in the oven tomorrow, can you manage, Julian? I think I shall have to go up to London. There's a special white sale at Burrows and Portman's. Besides," she added thoughtfully, "I think I ought to go and see Aunt Jane."

That sweet old lady, Miss Jane Marple, was enjoying the delights of the metropolis for a fortnight, comfortably installed in her nephew's studio flat.

"So kind of dear Raymond," she murmured. "He and Joan have gone to America, and they insisted I should come up here and enjoy myself. I so seldom get the chance of staying in London. And now, dear Bunch, do tell me what is worrying you."

Bunch was Miss Marple's favorite godchild, and the old lady looked at her with great affection as Bunch, thrusting her best felt hat farther on the back of her head, started on her story.

The recital was concise and clear. Miss Marple nodded her head. "I see," she said. "Yes, I see."

"That's why I felt I had to talk to you," said Bunch. "I don't really know what I ought to do. I can't ask Julian because—well, I mean, Julian's full of rectitude . . ."

This statement appeared to be perfectly understood by Miss Marple, who said, "I know what you mean, dear. We women—well, it's different." She went on, "You told me what happened, Bunch, but I'd like to know first what you think."

"It's all wrong," said Bunch. "The man who was there in the church, dying, knew all about sanctuary. He said it just the way Julian would have said it. I mean he was a well read, educated man. And if he'd shot himself, he wouldn't drag himself into a church afterwards and say 'sanctuary.' Sanctuary means that you're pursued, and when you get into a church you're safe. Your pursuers can't touch you. At one time even the law couldn't get at you." She looked questioningly at Miss Marple, who nodded.

Bunch went on, "Those people, the Eccleses, were quite different. Ignorant and coarse. And there's another thing. That watch—the dead man's watch. It had the initials W.S. on the back of it. But inside—I opened it—in very small lettering there was, *To Walter from his father*, and a date. Walter! The Eccleses kept talking of him as William or Bill."

Miss Marple seemed about to speak, but Bunch rushed on, "I know you're not always called the name you're baptized by. I mean, I can understand that you might be christened William and called Porky, or Carrots, or something. But your sister wouldn't call you William or Bill if your name was Walter."

"You mean that she wasn't his sister?"

"I'm quite sure she wasn't his sister. They were horrid—both of them. They came to the vicarage to get his things and to find out if he'd said anything before he died. When I said he hadn't, I saw it in their faces—relief. I think, myself," finished Bunch, "it was Eccles who shot him."

"Murder?" said Miss Marple.

"Yes," said Bunch. "Murder. That's why I came to you, darling."

Such a remark might have seemed incongruous to an ignorant listener, but in certain spheres Miss Marple had a reputation for dealing with murder.

"He said 'please' to me before he died," said Bunch. "He wanted me to do something for him. The awful thing is I've no idea what."

Miss Marple considered for a moment, then pounced on the point that had already occurred to Bunch. "But why was he there at all?" she asked.

"You mean," said Bunch, "if you wanted sanctuary you might pop into a church anywhere. There's no need to take a bus that only goes four times a day and come out to a lonely spot like ours."

"He must have come there for a purpose," Miss Marple said. "He must have come to see someone. Chipping Cleghorn's not a big place, Bunch. Surely you must have some idea of who it was he came to see?"

Bunch reviewed the inhabitants of the village in her mind before slowly shaking her head. "In a way," she said, "it could be anybody."

"He never mentioned a name?"

"He said Julian, or I thought he said Julian. It might have been Julia, I suppose. As far as I know, there isn't any Julia living in Chipping Cleghorn."

She screwed up her eyes as she thought back to the scene. The man lying there on the chancel steps, the light coming through the window with its jewels of red and blue . . .

"Jewels," said Bunch suddenly. "Perhaps that's what he said. The light coming through the east window looked like jewels."

"Jewels," said Miss Marple thoughtfully.

"I'm coming now," said Bunch, "to the most important thing of all. The reason really why I've come here today. You see, the Eccleses made a great fuss about having his coat. We took it off when the doctor was seeing to him. It was an old, shabby sort of coat—there was no reason they should have wanted it. I mean, they didn't look poor or as though a suit would mean anything much to them. They pretended it had sentimental value, but that was nonsense.

"Anyway, I went to find it, and as I was going up the stairs I remembered how he'd made a kind of picking gesture with his hand, as though he was fumbling with the coat.

"So when I got hold of the coat I looked at it very carefully and I saw that in one place the lining had been sewn up again with a different thread. Sewn up rather clumsily, as a man would sew it. I unpicked it and found a little piece of paper inside. I took it out and sewed it up again properly with thread that matched.

"I was careful, and I don't really think that the Eccleses would know I'd done it. I don't think so, but I can't be sure. Then I took the coat down to them and made some excuse for the delay."

"The piece of paper?" asked Miss Marple.

Bunch opened her handbag. "I didn't show it to Julian," she said, "because he would have said that I ought to have given it to the Eccleses. But I thought I'd rather bring it to you instead."

She handed the small docket across to Miss Marple.

"A cloakroom ticket," said Miss Marple, looking at it. "Paddington station."

"He had a return ticket to Paddington in his pocket," said Bunch.

"This calls for action," said Miss Marple. "But it would be advisable, I think, to be careful. Would you have noticed at all, Bunch dear, whether you were followed when you came to London today?"

"Followed!" exclaimed Bunch. "You don't think—?"

"Well, I think it's possible," said Miss Marple. "When anything is possible, I think we ought to take precautions." She rose with a brisk movement.

"You came up here ostensibly, my dear, to go to the sales. I think the right thing to do, therefore, would be for us to go to the sales. But before we set out, we might put one or two little arrangements in hand. I don't suppose," Miss Marple added obscurely, "that I shall need the old speckled tweed with the beaver collar just at present."

It was about an hour and a half later that the two ladies, rather the worse for wear and battered in appearance, their hair slightly disheveled, their hats askew, and both clasping parcels of hard-won household linen, sat down at a small and sequestered restaurant, called The Apple Bough, to restore their forces with steak and kidney pudding followed by apple tart and custard.

A smart young woman, with a lavish application of rouge and lipstick, entered The Apple Bough. After looking round vaguely for a moment or two, she hurried to their table. She laid down an envelope by Miss Marple's elbow.

"There you are, miss," she said.

"Oh, thank you, Gladys," said Miss Marple. "Thank you very much. So kind of you."

"Always pleased to oblige, I'm sure," said Gladys. "Ernie always says to me, 'Everything what's good you learnt from that Miss Marple of yours that you were in service with. Trained you proper,' he says, 'and don't you forget it,' and I'm sure I'm always glad to oblige you, miss."

"Such a dear, dear girl," said Miss Marple as Gladys departed. "Always so willing and so kind. One wishes sometimes that they wouldn't wear so much lipstick—but I dare say it gives them self-confidence."

She looked inside the envelope and then passed it on to Bunch. "Now be very careful, dear," she said. "By the way, is there still that nice young Inspector Craddock at Melchester that I remember?"

"I don't know," said Bunch. "I expect so."

"Well, if not," said Miss Marple thoughtfully, "I can always ring up the chief constable. I think he would remember me."

"Of course he'd remember you," said Bunch. "Everybody would remember you. You're unique." She rose. "Well, I'd better hurry

along or I shall miss the train."

Arrived at Paddington, Bunch went to the Left Luggage Office and produced the cloakroom ticket. A moment or two later a shabby suitcase was passed across to her, and carrying this she made her way to the platform where her train was already in.

The journey home was uneventful. Bunch got out of the train and made her way toward the exit, carrying the suitcase. She had nearly reached the doorway when a man, sprinting along the platform, suddenly seized the suitcase from her hand and rushed off with it.

"Stop!" Bunch yelled. "Stop him, stop him. He's taken my suitcase."

The ticket collector who, at this rural station, was a man of somewhat slow processes, had just begun to say, "Now, look here, you can't do that—" when a smart blow in the chest pushed him aside and the man with the suitcase rushed out from the station. He made his way to where a car was waiting.

Tossing the suitcase in, he was about to climb after it when out of the darkness a hand fell on his shoulder, and the voice of Police Constable Abel said, "Now then, what's all this?"

"Nonsense," said the man. "I don't know what this lady means. It's my suitcase. I just got out of the train with it."

"Now, let's get this clear," said Police Constable Abel. He looked at Bunch with a bovine and impartial stare. Nobody would have guessed that Abel and Mrs. Harmon spent long half hours in his off time discussing the respective merits of manure and bone meal for rosebushes. "You say, madam, that this is your suitcase?" said Police Constable Abel.

"Yes," said Bunch. "Definitely."

"And you, sir?"

"I say this suitcase is mine."

The man was tall, dark, and well dressed, with a drawling voice and a superior manner. A feminine voice from inside the car said, "Of course it's your suitcase, Edwin. I don't know what this woman means."

"We'll have to get this clear," said Police Constable Abel. "If it's your suitcase, madam, what do you say is inside it?"

"Clothes," said Bunch. "A long, speckled coat with a beaver collar, two wool jumpers, and a pair of shoes."

"Well, that's clear enough." He turned to the other.

"I am a theatrical costumier," said the dark man importantly. "This suitcase contains properties which I brought down here for

an amateur theatrical performance."

"Right, sir," said Police Constable Abel. "Well, we'll just look inside, shall we, and see? We can go along to the police station, or if you're in a hurry we'll take the suitcase back to the railway station and open it there."

"It'll suit me," said the dark man. "My name is Moss, by the way. Edwin Moss."

Police Constable Abel, holding the suitcase, went back into the station. "Just taking this into the Parcels Office, George," he said to the ticket collector.

"Oh, ay," said the latter.

Police Constable Abel laid the suitcase on the counter of the Parcels Office and pushed back the clasp. The case was not locked.

Bunch and Mr. Edwin Moss stood on either side of him, glaring at each other.

"Ah!" said Abel, as he pushed up the lid.

Inside, neatly folded, was a long, rather shabby tweed coat with a beaver fur collar. There were also two woolen jumpers and a pair of country shoes.

"Exactly as you say, madam," said Police Constable Abel, turning to Bunch.

Nobody could have said that Mr. Edwin Moss underdid things. His dismay and compunction were magnificent.

"I do apologize," he said. "I really do apologize. I must somehow or other have left my own suitcase on the train. Please believe me, dear lady, when I tell you how very, very sorry I am. Unpardonable—quite unpardonable—my behavior has been." He looked at his watch. "I must rush now. Probably my suitcase has gone on in the train. What the company will say to me for having mislaid their properties! I shall have to see what can be done."

Raising his hat once more, he said meltingly to Bunch, "Do, do forgive me," and rushed hurriedly out of the Parcels Office.

"Are you going to let him get away?" asked Bunch in a conspiratorial whisper of Police Constable Abel.

The latter slowly closed a bovine eye in a wink. "He won't get far, ma'am," he said. "That's to say, he won't get far unobserved, if you take my meaning."

"Oh," said Bunch, relieved.

"That old lady's been on the phone," said Police Constable Abel, "the one as was down here a few years ago. Bright, she is, isn't she? Sharp as a needle. But there's been a lot cooking up all today. Shouldn't wonder if the inspector or sergeant was out to see you

about it tomorrow morning."

It was the inspector who came, the Inspector Craddock whom Miss Marple remembered. He looked rather older and more careworn than when Bunch had seen him last, but he greeted her with a smile as an old friend.

"Crime in Chipping Cleghorn again," he said cheerfully. "You don't lack sensation here, do you, Mrs. Harmon?"

"I could do with rather less," said Bunch. "Have you come to ask me questions, or are you going to tell me things for a change?"

"I'll tell you some things first," said the inspector. "To begin with, Mr. and Mrs. Eccles have been having an eye kept on them for some time. There's reason to believe that they've been connected with several robberies in this part of the world. For another thing, although Mrs. Eccles has a brother named Sandbourn who has recently come back from abroad, the man whom you found dying on the chancel steps was definitely not Sandbourn."

"I knew he wasn't," said Bunch. "His name was Walter, to begin with, not William."

The inspector nodded. "Yes," he said, "they slipped up there."

"Who was he really?"

"His name was Walter Stevens, and he escaped some days ago from Charrington Prison."

"Of course," said Bunch softly to herself, "he was being hunted down by the law, and he took sanctuary." Then she asked, "What had he done?"

"I'll have to go back rather a long way. It's a complicated story. Several years ago there was a certain dancer doing turns in the music halls. I don't expect you'll have ever heard of her, but she specialized in an Arabian Nights turn. She wore bits of rhinestone and not much else and called the turn Aladdin in the Cave of Jewels. She wasn't much of a dancer, I believe, but she was—well—attractive. Anyway, a certain Asiatic royalty fell for her in a big way. Among other things, he gave her a magnificent emerald necklace."

"The historic jewels of a rajah?" murmured Bunch.

Inspector Craddock coughed. "Well, a rather more modern version, Mrs. Harmon. The necklace came from Cartier's. The affair didn't last very long—it broke up when our potentate's attention was captured by a certain film star whose demands were not quite so modest. She demanded marriage, a settlement, and considerable alimony. But none of that is our business.

"Zobeida, to give her stage name, hung on to the necklace, and

in due course it was stolen. It disappeared from her dressing room at the theater and there was a lingering suspicion in the minds of the authorities that she herself might have engineered its disappearance. Such things have been known as a publicity stunt, or indeed from more dishonest motives. The necklace was never recovered, but during the course of the investigation the attention of the police was drawn to this man, Walter Stevens.

"He was a man of education and breeding who had come down in the world, and who was employed as a working jeweler with a rather obscure firm which was suspected of acting as a fence for jewel robberies. There was evidence that this necklace had passed through his hands, and indeed the actual setting of the jewels was found, so it looked as though he'd abstracted the emeralds and disposed of them.

"It was, however, in connection with the theft of some other jewelry that he was finally brought to trial, convicted, and sent to prison. He had earned remission for good conduct in prison and had not very much longer to serve, so his escape was rather a surprise."

"But why did he come here?" asked Bunch.

"We'd like to know that very much, Mrs. Harmon. Following up his trail, it seems that he went first to London. He didn't see any of his old associates, but he visited an elderly woman, a Mrs. Jackson, who had formerly been a theatrical dresser. She won't say a word of what he came for but, according to other lodgers in the house, he left carrying a suitcase."

"I see," said Bunch. "He left it in the cloakroom at Paddington and then he came down here."

"By that time," said Inspector Craddock, "Eccles and the man who calls himself Edwin Moss were on his trail. They wanted that suitcase. They saw him get on the bus. They must have driven out in a car ahead of him, and been waiting for him when he left the bus."

"And he was murdered?" said Bunch.

"Yes," said Craddock. "It was Eccles's revolver, but I rather fancy it was Moss who did the shooting. Now, Mrs. Harmon, what we want to know is, where is the suitcase that Walter Stevens actually deposited at Paddington station?"

Bunch grinned. "Aunt Jane's got it," she said. "Miss Marple, I mean. That was her plan. She sent a former maid of hers with a suitcase packed with her things to the cloakroom at Paddington. We exchanged tickets, and I collected her suitcase and brought it

down by train. She seemed to expect that an attempt would be made to get it from me."

It was Inspector Craddock's turn to smile. "So she said when she rang up," he said. "I'm driving up to London to see her. Do you want to come too, Mrs. Harmon?"

"We—ell," said Bunch, considering. "We—ell, as a matter of fact, it's very fortunate. I had toothache last night, so I really ought to go to London to see the dentist, oughtn't I?"

"Definitely," said Inspector Craddock.

Miss Marple looked from Inspector Craddock's face to the eager face of Bunch Harmon. The suitcase lay on the table.

"Of course I haven't opened it," the old lady said. "I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing till somebody official arrived. Besides," she added, with a mischievous Victorian smile, "it's locked."

"Like to make a guess at what's inside, Miss Marple?" asked the inspector.

"I should imagine," said Miss Marple, "that it would be Zobeida's theatrical costumes. Would you like a screwdriver, inspector?"

The screwdriver soon did its work. Both women gave a slight gasp as the lid flew up. The sunlight coming through the window lit up what seemed like a treasure of sparkling jewels, red, blue, green, orange.

"Aladdin's Cave," said Miss Marple. "The flashing jewels the girl wore in her dance."

"Ah," said Inspector Craddock. "Now, what's so precious about it, do you think, that a man was murdered to get hold of it?"

"She was a shrewd girl, I expect," said Miss Marple thoughtfully. "She's dead, isn't she, inspector?"

"Yes, died three years ago."

"She had this valuable emerald necklace," said Miss Marple musingly. "Had the stones taken out of their setting and fastened here and there on her theatrical costume, where everyone would take them merely for colored rhinestones. Then she had a replica made of the Cartier necklace, and that of course was what was stolen. No wonder it never came on the market. The thief soon discovered the stones were false."

"Here is an envelope," said Bunch.

Inspector Craddock took it from her and extracted two official-looking papers. He read aloud: "*Marriage certificate between Walter Edmund St. John Stevens and Mary Moss*. That was Zobeida's real name."

"So they were married," said Miss Marple. "I see."

"What's the other?" asked Bunch.

"A birth certificate of a daughter, Jewel."

"Jewel?" cried Bunch. "Why, of course. Jewel! Jill! That's it. I see now why he came to Chipping Cleghorn. That's what he was trying to say to me. Jewel. Mrs. Mundy, you know. Laburnum Cottage. She looks after a little girl for someone. She's devoted to her. She's been like her own granddaughter. Yes, I remember now, her name was Jewel, only of course they never call her anything but Jill."

"Mrs. Mundy had a stroke about a week ago. I've been trying hard to find a good home for Jill. I didn't want her taken away to an institution. Her father must have heard about it in prison and managed to break away and get hold of this suitcase from the old dresser he or his wife left it with. I suppose if the jewels really belonged to her mother, they can be used for the child now."

"I should imagine so, Mrs. Harmon. *If* they're here."

"Oh, they'll be here all right," said Miss Marple cheerfully.

"Thank goodness you're back, dear," said the Reverend Harmon, greeting his wife with affection and a sigh of content. "Mrs. Burt really gave me some very peculiar fishcakes for lunch. I didn't want to hurt her feelings, so I gave them to Tiglath Pileser, but even he wouldn't eat them. I'm afraid I had to throw them out of the window."

"Tiglath Pileser," said Bunch, stroking the cat, "is very peculiar about what fish he eats. I often tell him he's got a proud stomach."

"And your tooth, dear?" asked her husband. "Did you have it seen to?"

"Yes," said Bunch. "It didn't hurt much, and I went to see Aunt Jane, too."

"Dear old thing," said Julian Harmon, "I hope she's not failing at all."

"Not in the least," said Bunch with a slight grin.

The following morning Bunch took a fresh supply of chrysanthemums to the church. The sun was once more pouring through the east window and Bunch stood in the jewelled light on the chancel steps. She said very softly under her breath, "Your little girl will be all right. I'll see that she is, I promise."

Then she tidied up the church, slipped into a pew, and knelt for a few moments to say her prayers before returning to the vicarage to attack the accumulated dust of two neglected days.

THE STORY THAT WON

Alvin Langdon Coburn,
Courtesy of the Permanent Collection
of the International Center of
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June Sidman.



The February Mysterious Photograph contest (photo above) was won by James Aiello of Sea Cliff, New York. Honorable mentions go to Carol Henning of Arlington, Texas; K. J. Franks of Wooster, Ohio; Robert Gray of Rutland, Vermont; Julia Buonocore of New York, New York; and Andrea J. Gassler of Wadena, Montana.

DEAD CARGO by James Aiello

"Gor blimey," Harry cursed. "There 'e is again!" He reined in the horse so suddenly that Littlun, who had been on his heels, ran into him, then cringed back.

"Wot is it, 'Arry?"

"It's that bloody cob wot barges along the river 'ere every night wivout lights nor union sticker. 'E gives me the creeps."

Littlun stared, "Wot yer gonna do?"

"I'd orta report 'im to the union for 'avin' no sticker. Or to the police for running wivout lights. But I dunno who 'e is."

"Yer think 'e's smuggling?"

"I dunno wot I think. It just ain't fair for 'im to be runnin' in the dark like 'e does whilst the rest of us draymen pays dues and taxes." He leaned over the rail and shouted at the bargeman.

"I'll have the union on you, yer old varmint, an' the law, too." He ducked back, expecting a burst of buckshot from the barge, but it passed under the bridge in dark silence.

Littlun crept up next to him. "'E's taking the bread out of our mouths, scabbin' like that. We orta kill 'im."

Harry scowled. "One of these days I'll take your measure!" he shouted. "Yer kin count on that!"

The ferryman chuckled into his turned-up collar. "That you will, laddie buck," he thought, "But you'll know not the time or the why or the how when old Charon here barges *you* down the Styx."

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\$60.00 per Hundred securing-stuffing envelopes from home. Offer-details: Rush stamped self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

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alfred HITCHCOCK'S mystery magazine

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FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

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\$1.25 each additional word

Capitalized words add—40¢ per word

SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS

SAME COPY ORDER

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the 5th day of the third preceding month for issue in which ad is to appear.

Words at \$1.25 each \$ _____

Capitalized word at .40¢ each \$ _____

Total amount for 1 ad \$ _____

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total \$ _____ x 3 = \$ _____

(b) Multiply total amount on above line by .85

(c) Total amount for 3 ads \$ _____

(Example: One 20 word ad \$25.00 x 3
months = \$75.00 x .85 = \$63.75)

\$ _____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading _____

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) \$25.00	(2) \$25.00	(3) \$25.00	(4) \$25.00	(5) \$25.00
(6) \$25.00	(7) \$25.00	(8) \$25.00	(9) \$25.00	(10) \$25.00
(11) \$25.00	(12) \$25.00	(13) \$25.00	(14) \$25.00	(15) \$25.00
(16) \$25.00	(17) \$25.00	(18) \$25.00	(19) \$25.00	(20) \$25.00
(21) \$25.25	(22) \$27.50	(23) \$28.75	(24) \$30.00	(25) \$31.25
(26) \$32.50	(27) \$33.75	(28) \$35.00	(29) \$36.25	(30) \$37.50

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of Words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word; Mark Holly, 360 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017; 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted. Phone # 2 Words. Symbols used as keys are charged for. City or State count as 1 word each; Garden City, New York; 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D., F.O.B., P.O., U.S.A., 7+10; 35mm count as 1 word; (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words) Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. Please make checks payable to ALFRED HITCHCOCK MAGAZINE.

Classified Continued

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

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CAN You Stuff 1000 Envelopes for \$500.00 Weekly? Send six 20¢ stamps. Blossom, Box 21, Stratford, NJ 08084.

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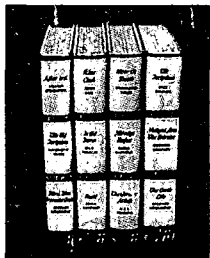
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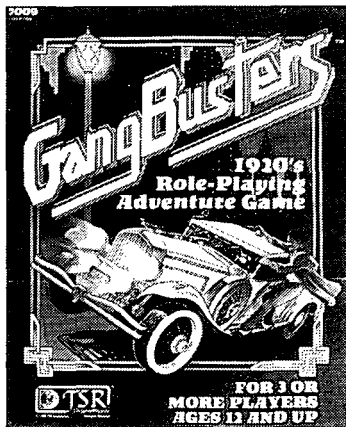
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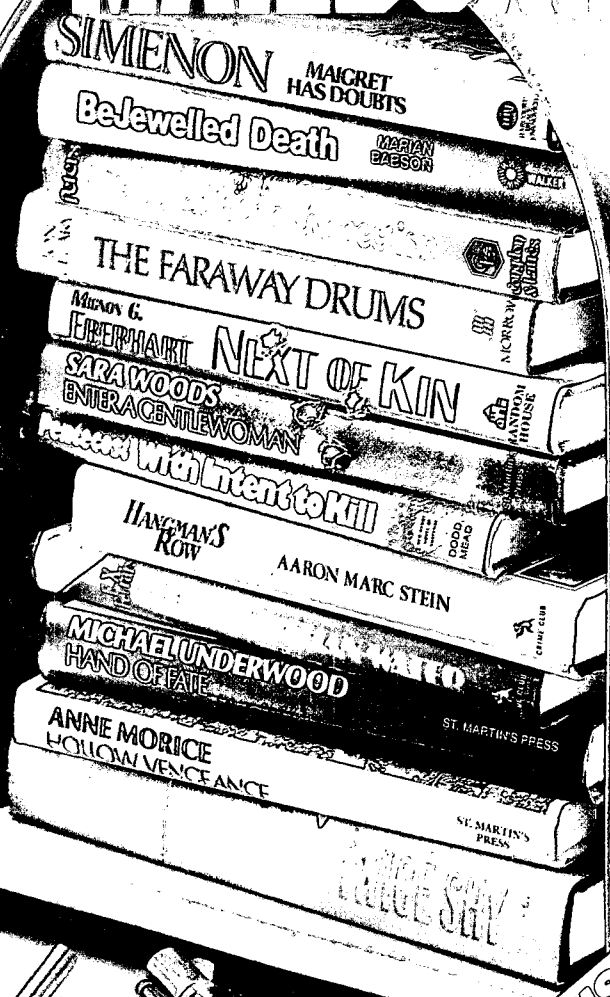
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